

# Essay On Self-Awareness And Despair



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# Preface



“We know that unconscious factors cause us to engage in certain forms of activity, to become insane, to fall asleep or to remain sleepless, to love a certain type and to remain frigid to another. They influence our methods of reasoning, making us at times illogical and one-sided, stubborn and unjust. In other words our entire life is influenced, if not entirely determined, by unconscious factors.”- André Tridon, *Psychoanalysis and Behavior*.

Self-awareness is the basis for our expression of consciousness as individuals, and is a profound experience which can only be understood by the subjective nature of the mind. We can objectify self-awareness in the sense that we all experience it in a similar way (regardless of the subjective nature of internal processes). Doing so does not change the fact that we all process the world around us in a subjective manner in which we are bombarded on all sides by symbolism, and imagery of the mind.

The unconscious mind is but one force that works towards the theme of self-awareness, and this is because it influences us so powerfully at all times. When we are freed of our prejudices regarding life, we are at our most authentic, and this is shown through the unconscious processes that the mind goes through.

The authentic here is a representation of the deconstruction of constructs of what is socially, and individually acceptable according to social standards. What I mean is that there is a point where when we are not aware of our thoughts that we truly process the world around us in a primal way. To become authentic is an argument that requires the belief that stripping oneself of outside mores, and restrictions regarding self-awareness is a benefit to the individual.

According to authors Otto Rank, and Hanns Sachs, in their work *The Significance of Psychoanalysis for the Mental Sciences*, “The knowledge of the real unconscious meaning and its comprehension, is neither alike with all symbols nor does it remain constant during the course of development and change of significance of the same symbol. Further, the comprehension of the symbol is different within a circle of culture holding about the same content of consciousness, according to the fields of application, the stratum of population in which it appears and the mental condition of the person using it.” Our focus on symbolism within the unconscious is something that needs to be expanded upon, especially because we are set on exploring from this angle the purposes of our consciousness in general.

The unconscious factors that André Tridon speaks of directly influence the conscious experience of how we live on an objective level. We find ourselves in a vast space of information gathering when it comes to consciousness, but this is because we are exploring something so profound that has many layers to it. Consciousness has not been *fully* explained, understood, or expressed on an objective level because it is still so mysterious to us. As I have mentioned in several of my previous works, we know the science behind consciousness to an extent, but there are missing pieces to the puzzle that we simply do not currently have access to.

Our memories change throughout time, and our ability to understand cognitively the world around us also changes as well. Dr. Sigmund Freud, in his work *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, states that “As it is known that the memory exercises a certain selection among the impressions at its disposal, it would seem logical to suppose that this selection follows entirely different principles in childhood than at the time of intellectual maturity.”

As we mature through various stages of life, we discover more about consciousness on a subjective basis. Our lives often change dramatically throughout the months, years, and decades leading up to the various stages of growth for us as individuals. It is in this light that we can see the patterns that are shaped for us regarding awareness.

Our memories are also distinct in that they are directly the result of objective truths that mesh with the subjective experience of the individual. When we think about it, it is observably true that we can know that our own realities are the result of objective, and subjective experiences. We feel it in our very bones as being a self-evident truth, alongside the will to live. These forces are powerful in that they stem naturally from us on a fundamental level. The nature of our very being is composed of those things which exist on a fundamental, as well as subjective plane of existence.

Self-awareness brings with it a surmountable level of responsibility that is conferred upon the individual from birth. This responsibility is powerful in that it can prove to be either beneficial, or harmful to us as sentient beings. We have a choice, albeit limited to the contextual, and situational factors highlighted in our lives, to continue to move forward through this life, or to die a lonely death.

These factors exemplify the tone of this text, and elevate what we do know about consciousness to a place in which a theory can be developed. This theory is fundamental to any starting point for this book. This is so because without a conceptualization of consciousness, the will, or the death impulse, there can be no further inquiry (on my part) into what I am searching regarding human motivation, and behavior.

Human behavior, therefore, begins, and ends, with a study of the will towards survival, and the death impulse. This is of course all within the context, and paradigm that I am presenting here in these writings of mine. Other theories, ideas, and thoughts are recognized here as existing in a valid space whereby my own contributions pale in comparison to the established works of greater writers than myself.

Nonetheless, I will presently utilize whatever resources, and faculties that I possess in order to explain the foundation more perfectly regarding my philosophy. This I shall do in each of the chapters which are divided by

subject with an emphasis on the commonalities between each factor that will be discussed.

Self-awareness is also conceptually linked with environmental, biological, and imminent forces, all of which contend for a greater influence upon the individual in question. In the beginning of our journey toward understanding consciousness we must be willing to realize that we do not need to limit ourselves to the objective alone. The subjective is equally important, and plays a distinct role in how consciousness is organized. It is with the awareness of opposition in life that we can begin to grasp the fundamentals of how survival, and death, play a vital part in the condition that we find ourselves in as human beings.

These concepts are indeed the very backbone of my philosophy regarding the will, death, consciousness, and the unconscious. It is through introspection, and then the writing down of these ideas, that I have conceived of a unity of a conceptual nature which is palpably visceral. In the relative dullness of our intellect in the scope of the cosmic nature of reality we still must strive to learn that which to many is a curse: i.e. the idea that our world is shaped by suffering almost exclusively. What I mean by this is not that there is no pleasure to be found in the world at all, it is just that suffering is at the very core of our humanity in retrospect.

Indeed, it is with suffering that we find ourselves transformed from one phase of life to the next. We suffer so that we can grow, and not stagnate. Not only that, but we are beholden to embrace our sorrows in such a manner that we are able to overcome our previous state of incompleteness. Each phase that we go through in life teaches us something new about ourselves. This is true especially as we age, and find ourselves concerned with things such as one's own physical health, as well as those around us who we care for. When we realize that we are bound for the deterioration of aging, we are also able to come to terms with the ever-present reality of death, and dying. What we thought we had learned in our youth has turned out to be a farce. As human beings we are haunted by our

own lack of insight into the inner workings of our mind in preparation for death.

Psychologically, we are bound to factors which are presently before us; namely, those things which are through nurtured in us since birth, and socially conceived ideas of the truth which we ham-fistedly hold onto for dear life. We are clumsy creatures in regard to our intellectual capabilities because, although we have achieved a great deal of advancements in the sciences, we still do not have a fundamental understanding of consciousness as it is represented to us.

Representations, therefore, provide small windows in which we are able to see a portion of reality before us. These windows of knowledge are found in the subjective experiences that we all share as part of the greater human family. We are able to make sense of some of the information we gather about the outside world through our interactions with others, and through educational settings. A whole host of ways exists whereby the individual may find it suitable to apprehend information, and adapt it to their own skill sets of knowledge. It is with this in mind that I propose that the very essence of my philosophy rests upon not only my own individual theories, but as representations of symbology that strikes at the heart of the human soul.

Reality is constructed from various sources, and this is inclusive of our perception, and ability to peer into our unconscious mind. What I am saying here is that though physical laws are at the forefront of what remains to be seen as true, we must also consider our subjective experience as being a central part of that reality. The world, being as it is, cannot be fully perceived without the subjective look into the mind of the individual in question. None of us are able to ascertain the truth of the world around us without subjectivity playing a role for us to take upon ourselves. We must wear the mantle of the subjective as we roam through this world, and this is especially so because of the way that we interact with others. Perhaps this is one of the great tragedies of mankind; that we cannot fathom the depths, and fullness of the truth concerning reality.

Nonetheless, we must press on, and consider that both the subjective, as well as the objective, both exist simultaneously for each one of us as human beings. This is a consideration that is inclusive of everyone throughout the world, regardless of the environmental situation, or context one finds themselves living in. We are united in our suffering regarding the nature of reality, and our inability to perceive it beyond the standard scientific accomplishments we have inherited. We know that matter exists because it can be observed, and in turn, can also be verified by anyone that witnesses it. What we do not know is the extent of consciousness, and how it ultimately shapes our perception of a world that could be quite different from how we experience it.

To clarify, I mean that we are currently unable to understand the depths of consciousness in a way that can be fully rectified with our perceptions of reality. We know what it is like to experience colors, sensations, and so on, but we must ask ourselves what all of this truly means for us. This is where self-awareness steps in, and allows us to perceive to a degree the world around us, and become unconsciously paralyzed by the suffering surrounding us. The world, as Schopenhauer suggested, is full of suffering, and this is what life consists of in its purest essence.

It is through suffering that we experience the distinction between truly living, and merely existing. If we are content with merely existing, we will soon find ourselves beset on all sides by the nature of life which consists of imminent pain, and anguish of all stripes. On the other hand, if we focus only on that which is of the nature of suffering, we will then not be able to withstand the trials, and tribulations that life places before us. In either extreme, we will find ourselves upended by these trials, and find ourselves contemplating the true nature of human weakness. These factors, when looked at from a distance, can place us in a mental state of despair because of the conceptualization that takes form regarding the ever-present nature of suffering in our lives. In a previous work of mine, *The Tragedy of Sentience*, I suggested that this is a foundational point of despair.

Symbolism allows us to not only peer into the unconscious, but to express that which is unable to be articulated by words alone in any language. This symbolism is evident throughout human history, and has provided us all with a way to glimpse into the mind of the collective consciousness (as it may exist). We cannot continue to look into those lurid aspects of humanity without realizing that we, too, are at the mercy of the symbolic in the sense that we cannot function without it.

The way we function in society is how we are ultimately able to provide ourselves with a way to make sense of the subjective, and symbolic. By this, I mean that the more well-adjusted we are to our contemporaries, the more we are able to take advantage of our time here to contemplate these things. It can be said that mankind is at the mercy of its own slavery to convention, and this is where we must look at the contextual rather than the black, and white of any given situation.

Our lives are muddled with the grayness of the world, and this is so even when we consider the symbolic, and subjective. We perceive truths as such, but in addition to this reality, we also incorrectly perceive the world around us. We can never know the fullness of what this reality represents because we are stuck, as it were, in the limitations of humanity. These limitations drive us further, paradoxically, into the realm of theory, and idea, as well as the depths of despair.

On a philosophical level, it can be said that self-awareness is like a loaded gun, whereby we must continue to exist regardless of how dangerous the world around us is. Self-awareness holds the illusion of protection, because it provides the individual with some basis for knowledge that is irrefutable (such as the laws of cognitive science), yet it is limited by its descent into the abyss of personal biases, and clouded judgments. Regardless of how it is possible to be easily engaged with self-deception, our journey toward self-awareness begins, as is customary, from an early age. We are molded, and shaped by societal forces, of which we are born to be engaged with on a profound level. This profundity is influenced, in a sense, by environmental, as well as biological imperatives.

# Introduction



“Psychologically considered, the symbol formation remains a regressive phenomenon, a reversion to a certain stage of pictorial thinking which exists among highly cultured people in clearest shape in those exceptional states, in which the conscious adaptation to reality, is either partially limited, as in the religious and artistic ecstasy, or seems totally annulled, as in the dream and mental disturbances.” – Otto Rank, Hanns Sachs, *The Significance of Psychoanalysis for the Mental Sciences*.

The world around us is composed of many fundamental sources which align toward the objective, as well as factually known. These sources range from our understanding of physics, mathematics, medicine, and the psychiatric sciences. In addition to these sources, there are also the subjective, analytical, and symbolic to contend with in this world. Why is it that I am emphasizing the objective in a work that deals largely with the subjective? It is because the foundations upon which we stand today are enveloped by the fundamental truths that are found in the objective.

We cannot afford to ignore the truth of the matter, which is that our realities are composed of dichotomous forces that work in tandem with one another throughout our everyday lives. These forces range from the will to live, to the death impulse, and in between with the liminal spaces of non-being versus the experience of being alive. Indeed, it is with opposing forces of existence that we have a composite picture of reality before us, and this is evidenced through the integration of the subjective with the objective experiences of humanity.

In our time of need, we often find ourselves reaching out to others to help assuage our suffering. We also look toward the intellectual, and rational, to help assist us in some small way to figuring out our dilemmas.

With this in mind, it is important to remember that we cannot come to conclusions about life without realizing the interconnectedness of everything that exists. We are not on an island by ourselves, although our brains are secluded often by the subjective nature of experience. Everything that we experience has been in a sense experienced before by others, inclusive of the pain that we might go through.

Regardless of how connected we are to others, there is also a sense of solitude to be found in our conscious states. This solitude is magnified intensely by the individual going through distress, and it must be recognized that it is as powerful as the experience of connectedness. In the experiences of grief, loss, emotional pain, and mental illness, we are utterly alone because of the subjective nature of those states. Others may have experienced similar states to ours, but still that is not the same as having experienced exactly what another person has gone through. This is one of the paradoxes of being human in that we are simultaneously connected, and separated from others depending on the context of the situation.

Our sentience brings with it not only the responsibility of being upon the individual, but a profound loneliness caused by those aforementioned internal experiences. This loneliness is compounded by the fact that we are condemned to a form of freedom of being through the power of the will, as it exists. Though we are limited even in our freedom because of the forces of the world around us which police our activities, we still find ourselves on the precipice of decision making.

Whether we continue to live on in this world, or choose to die through suicide, we are condemned to experience all that we do even if it is in a limited sense (because of our relatively short lifespans). I say condemned because it is evident that no matter what we choose in life, (whether these choices bring us pleasure or pain is irrelevant) the outcome remains the same and that is the experience of the dying process.

Our awareness brings with it an understanding of mortality that is not just academic; it is utterly devastating to the individual on a subconscious

level. This devastation brings us to our knees in the sense that it is something that we all must eventually realize lords over us, i.e. death itself. Even though we are going to be consumed by death at some point, we must realize that we are still condemned, like prisoners, to live, and taste a modicum of freedom before we ultimately die. This condemnation is self-imposed, but also intrinsic to human experience, because it is so complicated to begin with.

This complication only represents the various aforementioned dichotomies which exist due to our being alive in this world. It is through these dichotomies that we must etch out a life for ourselves regardless of the suffering which is ever present. As we do so, we find that we understand very little of the world around us. We know what we can learn from the sciences, and through our education in the world around us, but there are serious blind spots in consciousness which must be accounted for.

There must also be accountability on an individual level for the way we interact with the world. To clarify, I mean that though we are educated through societal means, we must allow for there to be a sense of individual expression of the will. The will, being primitive, is also very complicated at the same time. It is with the will that we experience the very basis for the dichotomies that exist in the world. These dichotomies offer a lesson to us in that we must learn that the world around us is gray rather than black, and white.

It is through the knowledge gained that life is complex, and nuanced, that we find ourselves able to begin to understand foundationally what the will consists of. As we live our lives, there is a continual battle for existence, and non-existence. This battle is found through the will to survive, as well as the death impulse. I have mentioned this conflicting state within the self in several of my past works, but I will touch upon it to a degree here. In the world as it exists, there are nuances which must be remarked upon, and those consist of moral dilemmas, ethical questions, personal conflicts, and mental states of being which vary individually.

The self is ephemeral in the sense that we cannot count on it in our times of distress, as it is the last thing to leave us when we are on our death beds. All of our life can be dedicated to understanding death by simply living this life with a reflective sense of being. We have the opportunity to look at common everyday occurrences and tie them into our understanding of death, and the dying process. By doing this, we are preparing for death in a way that is proportionate to our daily ruminations upon it.

Many do not think of death in a conscious way, and this is displayed in how there is a fascination with the cult of youth in modern society. This is not simply a feature of modern society alone, because it has been expressed in the past, but it is one that is increasingly becoming enmeshed within society as it stands. By observing the secular world around us, we see in entertainment a lust for life that is unlike any other, but it is misguided in that there is no reflection upon death.

Consciousness keeps us aware of our surroundings, and gives us a sense of place in terms of a basic understanding of the biology our bodies represent for us. We are, in a sense, locked in our bodies from a level of consciousness that surrounds us mysteriously. This mystery is composed of an inner truth which must be pondered upon if there is to be any headway in understanding the human mind. The inner truth that I speak of is the subjective, as well as the unconscious portions of our minds.

When we go through hardship, receive devastating news, or cannot continue to live as we had become accustomed to in times past, we are then ripe for understanding just how well and truly screwed we are. It is not just our situation that gives us pause to reflect on this truth, but it is also our shared situation with the rest of humanity that we are experiencing. This shared portion of suffering is our lot as human beings, and we must accept this in a stoic manner if we are to find any modicum of peace within our hearts. Nothing that we do can change the ultimate outcome of life which is to die in innumerable ways. This is not to say that we should merely despair. On the contrary, this realization can prompt individuals to look at life from a more balanced point of view.

The unconscious takes over when we are not actively aware of our surroundings, our situation, and our place in the world. It is a mental state which brings with it sensational imagery, symbolism, and fantasies of all kinds that do not have a necessary correlation with the outside world. By this, I mean that the unconscious is present at all times, and is continuously nourished by the conscious experiences of the individual. These conscious experiences are reflective of our everyday lives, however mundane they may be, because we are forced to obey the laws of the world around us.

Our foundation as individuals is based upon sociological, environmental, and genetic components. Each of these realities serves to engage us in a way that allows us to become more acutely aware of our surroundings, and our responses to stimuli. Of course, we are not merely akin to bacteria or lower life forms because we have a degree of sentience which transforms us in the sense that we respond to the outside world in varying forms.

Suffering permits us to view reality from a more lucid point of view. What I mean here is that it is through suffering that we can see that life is full of it, and our metaphorical cups overflow with anguish in this world. As I have previously mentioned in other works of mine, there is pleasure in this world to be had, however intermittent it may appear to us to be. Still, the pain outweighs any sense of pleasure we could possibly have because those things are so fleeting for us as human beings. Our shared suffering is that we are aware of our surroundings, and can feel emotions that lead to complex scenarios in one's own life.

Even though it may seem like our suffering is our own, it is not. It is a shared suffering that aligns us with the body, and spirit of mankind. This spirit is not a metaphysical one, but is strictly concerned with the fact that we all go through some degree of suffering one way or another. Whether this suffering consists of physical ailments or mental illness, it is not important to make such a distinguishment. Our judgments as human beings are flawed, and our understanding of what is important in life is doubly so.

The world itself is not only suffering, but it is greatly influenced by the nature of it as a biological fact. We are condemned not only to the freedom of being, but we are also damned in our shared experience of suffering in general. This is the great communion of the human race; that we are leveraged out with suffering as something that always exists for us in one way or another. We have a unique connection with one another through our sentience, as well as the experience of suffering with the added feature of awareness.

Looking inward for answers allows us to navigate the world in such a manner as to fortify us in some strange way. Even though we may never have all the answers as to what consciousness consists of, we can interpret the world around us in a way that is highly individualistic. This individualism is present when we daydream, or fantasize about something that we think deeply upon. It is in those moments of quietude (which we find ourselves rarely experiencing) that we come to realize that our capabilities for enduring suffering is tremendous.

It is in the nature of self-awareness for one to fall into the depths of despair, as well as the loftiness of idealism depending on the situation. We find ourselves mostly enslaved by the circumstances of our birth, of which we never had a choice but to exist in the first place. This does not mean that we cannot enjoy the various things which we are capable of enjoying. It simply means that from birth we have either disadvantages, or advantages depending on our scenario, environment, and societal upbringing.

We can imagine a world where suffering does not exist, but regarding this we are only capable of thinking about something that is illusory rather than real. Certainly, our imaginations are capable of drumming up the most fantastical of things which can eventually become solidified ideas, thoughts, and actions. Nonetheless, the world, because it is filled with biological life, will always be prone to immense suffering of some stripe. Our lives are accountable to ourselves, and in some cases, this affects others in a significant way depending on how we react to the world around us.

We must remember that we all will succumb to some form of misfortune in this world. This is irrespective of whether or not that misfortune comes in the form of economic, physical, mental, or situational means. There are plenty of examples of why misfortune is something that is more common than readily admitted, and one is that we as humans are prone to it because of situations that arise in life. Even though we must experience what we perceive to be a negative force (i.e. misfortune itself) we must also experience moments of power from within which shows just how much pain we can endure as a species.

Indeed, this endurance is something which is inevitable in the human experience, and is one of those burning aspects of our lives which can be seen as purely emanating from the will itself. The will ushers forth a proclamation to us as human beings that comes from a profound place of desire. It is through desire that we loudly proclaim that we, too, are alive, and are willing to sacrifice everything for the attainment of our goals, however unrealistic these may be.

We are sociologically influenced in our behavior because of everything we have learned from social cues to the imitation of others. It is through the realization that we are simultaneously alone, as well as united with our fellow sufferers in this world that we become authentic. This authenticity derives exclusively from the power of endurance that comes from pain, and anguish. One of the most authentic experiences in this life one can have is that of losing a loved one. Whether it is a close acquaintance, a friend, or a lover, the context of the situation is irrelevant because it all deals with the same end result which is death.

Many in this world choose to ignore the significance of the drive towards death which is so prevalent in the unconscious mind. This drive, like the will to live, keeps us ever at odds with ourselves, and is a feature of conscious awareness. This awareness is automatically there, etching out messages to us in the form of dreams, imagery, and symbolism. Each of these aspects are characterized by the almost forbidden taboo thoughts of our subjective selves.

Death is still the great taboo, because though we may have scrutinized it thoroughly from a scientific point of view, we are still leagues behind in a conclusive understanding of it from thanatological, and psychological areas of study. To clarify, there is a medical, and clinical understanding of death, and there are other areas of study which must be looked at as well which hold great import for death in general as a phenomenon. Being self-aware also brings with it a scathing knowledge of death, and this is evidenced in the symbolism behind anything from marketing to general entertainment.

Everything we experience in society is geared towards a trace of death in that the shadow of the presentation we are given is always that of the morose. Bright colors, lively designs, positive sounding music, and pleasing art all are poisoned by the metaphorical cup of death. Indeed, everything we touch, experience, love, and hope for has an end in destruction of some sort. Our self-awareness brings us to this conclusion one way or another, even if it means that we experience it during the process of dying.

Life can be exceptional in the sense that we may be fortunate enough to find our most authentic selves. How this happens is a mystery because each person is a world unto themselves. Each person has to experience life for themselves, and this is so because there is so much subjectivity involved. This subjectivity springs forth from the unconscious mind, and those desires which are either expressed, or suppressed.

Whether we express, or suppress, our desires (and the will that springs forth from it), there is always something that exists beyond our control regarding consciousness. Think of all the times you have tried to stop thinking, and find some peace in your mind through meditating upon nothingness. All those times have been cloaked by the insidious nature of the conscious mind, and this is due to the fact that we have no way of permanently shutting off our thoughts. We can, like the sages of old, attempt to train ourselves in such a way that we control our thoughts to a degree, but this is not something that is common among humans.

We can never be certain of where consciousness will take us because we are continuously on the path of a unique lifestyle which is specific to each one of us. We all have situations, contexts that exist, and perceptual experiences which guide us into one way of acting or another depending on our situation. The influence that sociological situations have upon us is tremendous, and this is certain because there are no easy ways to escape one's own given condition. There are aspects of the individual which are heavily marked by the conditions that we are brought up in, and live in. These aspects do not show us anything other than what we truly are, which is to say that we are victims of the conditioning, and environment in which we have grown up in.

The various states of consciousness can be classified by how aware we are of our surroundings. To clarify, I mean that it is through self-awareness that we begin to see that we have the capability to conjure up truths regarding how we respond to this life. Our response is one that is profound in that it is involuntary, and stems from the unconscious mind. This is why we are so very miserable a great deal of the time.

We do not have a way to mute awareness other than sleep, or perhaps prescribed or recreational drugs. Still, even if we are able to maintain a sense of dullness of our consciousness, that cannot relieve our ability to respond to, and be aware of suffering on a fundamental level.

Even if we do not feel pain because of some artificial, or contrived means, we still experience the essence of anguish. Anguish is a feature of human experience, and it is an aspect which is ever present even when we do not actively feel its influences. Though we cannot take away the pain that we have felt in times past, we can analyze it in such a manner as to allow us to understand it better.

No individual has ever become wise in ignoring the fundamental truths of life, and death. We must be cognizant of this statement because it represents the whole of the essence of this body of work. This is why it is so important to reflect upon death.

Everything we are bound to experience has the influence of the will, as well as of death, in essence. This is shown over time, and time again with the various ways we try to distract ourselves amid the very real changes that aging brings to us. We are weak creatures that cling onto the ephemeral in any way possible to avoid looking at death directly as a distinct reality. This reality is biological, but it is also psychological in that it affects us whilst we live.

Our lives are dependent wholly upon our reconciliation with the subjective, and objective realities. This being so, we can also determine that there are aspects of the human condition which force us to exist in various contextual senses with the dichotomy of existence in mind. There is the acausal, as well as causal, the night, and the day, and life, as well as death. In all things there are dichotomous forces which spring us up against the wall of truth which cannot be denied for long. We, as human beings, fight death with a tremendous force of creative self-willed ignorance of the truth.

As I mentioned previously, awareness is continuously surrounding us, and we cannot escape the grasp of our realities. No matter how hard we try, we will eventually come to realize that our lot in life is something that must be confronted and seen for what it is; a meaningless battle against forces stronger than us. Death is the ultimate judge, jury, and arbiter of fate for us as human beings. This much is true. What we must also realize is that there are aspects to existence, and experience, that should be examined at length in order to understand the essence of what death represents for us.

Self-awareness, as it stands, is built upon the various structures which underlie human experience. We are destined for death, that is certain, but we are also destined for experience through cognizance for the duration of our lifespan. This is a cause of despair because of the fact that we cannot escape the hands of fate, nor of death. Our human condition teaches us that we are at the mercy of the world around us, and our limitations, as they express themselves in our daily lives.

# Chapter One



## *On Self-Awareness as the Basis for Despair*

Whether we would like to admit it to ourselves, or not, we are ultimately at the brunt end of evolution with our level of self-awareness. We have inherited, as the human race, the very misfortune of being hyper self-aware. Why is it that I argue this? It is because we know that we shall die one day, and that everything we have ever cherished, or loved, will disappear from the face of the earth.

This starkness of reality is where humanity is bonded in complete submission to the feeble needs of the flesh, and mind. I have often described human beings as being likened to a puzzle. This is because there are pieces, or aspects, of reality which still have to be put together in order for us to solve the meaning of our experiences for ourselves. We cannot rely on outside sources for our happiness, nor can we even be guaranteed that we will find it from within.

Our feeble needs are to be nourished, to be loved, to be cared for, and to have assurance of continued existence where there is none to be found. I say feeble needs because these form a coherent foundation for what I call the baseness of the human condition. We are constantly in want of that which we cannot fully grasp onto, and this is inclusive of the paradigm that consciousness may be more than what we assumed it was at first to be. Our simple needs, which are of the aforementioned aspects, are dominating factors in our lives because we need an anchoring force on a foundational level.

The anchoring force of being is found through environmental, sociological, and cultural conditions irrespective of the individual. We are all in need of nurturing, care, and emotional regard. But what is at the

center of all this? It is quite possible that even through love we may find a communion with death that is at first indistinguishable from life in the common perception of things. It is life that gives us our share of sorrow, pain, and grief, but also those moments of peace, tranquility, and hope for a better tomorrow.

Though we are stranded in our relatively placid nature regarding a cohesive understanding of being, we occasionally find ourselves reflecting on death from the perspective of someone who has been directly affected by it in some way. When we think of the possibility of losing a loved one, or someone at least relatively close to us, we think of the absence of presence more than that of the experience of death itself. This aspect of grief is what I call contextually discerned experience through the primitive nature of the death impulse.

Edward J. Kempf, in his work, *Psychopathology*, says that “the natural course of the individual who has an average organic constitution is to develop a functional capacity that acquires from its world the material that gives it a state of virility, goodness and happiness. If it cannot adapt itself so as to attain this state, its affective requirements have been unfortunately conditioned through the influence of associates, particularly the adults who raised it.” This further provides an example of how we are conditioned to personify who we feel we are as human beings, even if our needs are not being adequately met.

It is in the details of humanity that we find ourselves becoming even more lost in our cognitive awareness. We are biological creatures that require a certain depth of connection which is only found rudimentarily in most of nature. This connection goes beyond familial or friendship bonds that form throughout life. It is one in which we see that we are influenced by the primitive, as well as the nuanced, and advanced. If we are to dissect things further, let us suppose that we encompass in truth those factors which cause us to be singled out among the rest of the creatures on this planet. If we make such a supposition, we are not stating that we are superior in any sense. In truth, it is the opposite that is being claimed.

Kempf continues on to describe in a later passage that “The nature of the biological struggle of the individual is determined by what the wishes or autonomic cravings need in the form of stimuli and what the social environment offers.” He is stating here that we are at the mercy of our biology, and that our very environment is specifically geared toward either having us attain those needs, or to deny us them.

There is no escape from this biological struggle whilst we live, and this is because there is only death in the end as respite. Our problems, trials, and tribulations all come together to challenge us, and our will to survive these hardships is continuously being tested. Within all of this chaos we find that purpose is something that must be created in order for there to be any meaning in the suffering we experience in our lives. The more we live, the more we suffer, and this is inclusive of mental anguish just as much as physical pain.

Even though we are destined to age, decline, and eventually die, our awareness of these facts miraculously still allows us to deign to continue living our daily lives. We are almost unmoved by the morbid truths ahead of us, and this is done either through ignorance, or willful choice. To clarify, I mean that though we are consciously aware of our mortality, many of us live as if death were not a main issue to focus on. This can be seen as a defense mechanism within the individual because of the fact that there is a willing denial of death in the way certain behaviors are displayed.

We are destined to be enslaved by our biology, and also our subjective experience of this life. We can know facts, figures, and objective truths about the world to the extent that we have senses to recognize them. It is also true that we process information on a level which is extremely subjective, and often muddles the objective realities we face with the world of symbolism, and thought. As we go through life, and experience the things that we do, we are likely to conclude that at the very least, there is a subjectivity to purpose which is neither black nor white. This subjectivity is based on how we process information cognitively, and is displayed as something which is highly individualistic in nature.

It is not just experience which leads us to believe that suffering is paramount in our lives, but it is also the dichotomy of the objective versus subjective. This distinction maintains that there are multiple layers to reality, of which, consciousness is but one of these. Consciousness, being the reason why we suffer as we do, keeps us continuously aware even if only on an unconscious basis of the impulse toward death. This impulse, as previously mentioned in several of my works, is not necessarily an active conscious one, but an aspect of humanity which is realistic in its realization of the truth that we must also die.

Suffering, and pleasure, therefore, become unified through the layers of reality which are dichotomous in nature. These layers include symbolism versus concrete reality, life versus death, peace versus war, and pleasure versus pain. The symbolism versus concrete reality is focused specifically on how we process information versus the objective truth before us. Life comes before death, and is connected with it on a fundamental level. Peace versus war relates to conflict on a bigger scale than just the individual, but remains fundamental because conflict begins at the level of the individual. Pleasure, of course, is ephemeral, and therefore can be accounted for as something less than that of pain, or even boredom, which can lead to anguish.

As we venture into our inner world of the subjective, we are able to see that from a primitive viewpoint all our desires are one and the same as the rest of humanity. At a base level, we have to have our needs for safety, comfort, and love fulfilled in order to progress on a psychologically balanced mode of existence. The subjective comforts as well as causing a great deal of anguish, and this is because of the fact that we experience a rudderless void of sentience that is not wholly akin to the objective. This causes an existential questioning of what the truth deals with regarding subject matter more pressing than the paying of bills, taxes, and rent. Our whole being is dependent upon how we introspectively look at things, and process the world around us. By actively approaching life from the paradigm that we are destined for death, we can then choose authenticity.

According to Dr. Otto Rank, in his work *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, “The essence of neurosis, and of all higher mental qualifications, comprises a special activity of the imagination which is primarily manifested in the play of the child, and which from about the period preceding puberty takes hold of the theme of the family relations.” This can be interpreted to mean that what is peculiar to us as individuals, inclusive of our faculties of cognition, stems from our youth when we are mainly preoccupied with the stability of our base needs. Our family, in this instance, is the center of where these base needs are supposedly met. I say supposedly because there is no guarantee that the need to be unconditionally regarded, or cared for in a nourishing way will be met.

We are all neurotics in the sense that we find unique, and individualistic ways to fend off thoughts of death. Similarly, we are at the precipice of our own will, and desire when it comes to the realization of the awfulness of the truth. Our lust for life is one in which it is tainted by the poison of truth, which is that our days are numbered, and we have no clue as to which day will be our last. By this poison we are forced to succumb to our own demise day by day, and hour by hour. Self-awareness, therefore, is one in which the encompassing truth of death becomes known to the individual.

Indeed it is through our childhood, or even regression towards childhood on a psychological level, that brings us to the conclusion that even our base needs cannot quench those burning questions within the self. The self, being a construct, is focused on meeting the base needs common to all humans, as well as psychological needs on an individual basis. Without the foundation of environmental, biological, or sociological forces working in tandem with the other, we would not have the foundations for the will to survive as we currently do.

Death, being natural, is akin to non-existence in the sense that there was once a time when we did not think, need, want, or desire. We have gone through ageless eons of non-existence, and now suddenly here we are. Beyond basic biology, this is a mind-blowing concept.

When we were once nothing, there was no possibility for concern regarding anything the mind can think of. It was a vast void of non-being which connected us with the moldering substrate of the universe. Now that we are here, and conscious, we are faced with the possibility that our sense of being will be destroyed at the moment of our deaths. I do not mean to take any great steps into a metaphysical argument for permanence in the conscious state, so I will continue to describe death as an end to all things.

The universe is so vast that we cannot begin to fathom its depths, and this is because we have limited access to reality and what it consists of. This limitation does not inhibit us from learning the sciences, and information which has been corroborated as true from our forefathers in the distant past. What this does inhibit us in is the lack of ability to even fantasize about the possibilities that the universe has in store for not only us, but the rest of the world. Yes, we can imagine a tremendous deal of things, inclusive of the origins of the universe, and those theories which lay behind it all, but we cannot imagine the profundity of it all. We are simply too limited to do so.

Our limitations keep us from experiencing the truth regarding the fullness of our natures outside of the biological imperatives that exist. These limitations confound us, and keep us in the dark from truly understanding what it is that we ultimately represent on a symbolic or abstract level. The symbolic, as I have described it here, is part, and parcel of the subjective mind. Within the subjective mind we gather the information that is provided to us, and utilize symbolism to our advantage on an evolutionary level. Imagination, and creativity, are all central focal points to understanding these aspects of the human mind.

It is with creativity that we survive in our surroundings, and find ourselves overwhelmed by the power that the mind represents. It is within the mind that we have the power to make decisions, to choose to live or die, and to choose to believe in the value of our lives as well as that of others. When we think about our ephemeral natures, we can then come to realize that our conceptualizations of reality are often patently false.

These theories that I propose regarding human life are simply representative of a gathering of ideas that are related to one another by virtue of existence. We exist; therefore, we suffer, yet also experience moments of tranquility, or ease of mind. We are in the midst of a great upheaval of consciousness because we live in evolutionary times. By evolutionary times, I mean we are continuously evolving mentally, and physically as a species. It is through evolution that we are able to keep in mind our limitations as individuals, and this is evident by the fact that we are sociologically conditioned in an evolutionary way as time marches on. What was true in the past, is not necessarily so in the present. I do not mean laws of physics, or mathematical principles here. What I am stating is that our perceptions have evolved over time.

The evolution of being is something which is based on the principles of psychology. Psychology, being a field which is ever growing, adapting, and existing as a discipline in its own right allows us to see through the veil of the human mind. It is through this discipline that consciousness is scrutinized in such a manner as to apply to it mental principles which are innately human. These principles maintain us balanced in the sense that we are directly influenced by psychological foundations. When we experience phenomena such as mental illness, we seek out tools to help us survive the onset of disorder within the mind. These tools are based on sound principles of science, such as seeking out a therapist, or receiving psychiatric supplementary care.

The scientific principle of death is that we cease to exist, our brains die, and we physically become corpses. This principle is one that must be understood on a profound level in order to build a foundational meaning for this life. We must seek out to continuously fortify ourselves with general knowledge regarding death so as to have a better intellectual understanding of it. Thanatology is one discipline with respect to death that is currently becoming more developed as time goes on. Understanding the experience of death from a detached point of view can go a long way when considering the acceptance of it by the individual.

As we fortify ourselves against the stream of the everlasting truth of this world, namely death, we come to realize that at some point it was all for naught. Every moment of joy, every healthy breath we take, and all the sorrows of life are reduced to mere ashes in the wake of the human experience. Death is the great catalyst to living to the fullest. This may seem paradoxical, but it is clearly not. For what else do we have in our possession of knowledge that influences us quite like death? There is nothing that I know of that can compare with the knowledge of death as a phenomenon.

We cry out in the wilderness of this world, and search in vain for answers to the meaning of life. Then, at some point, we die. That is our story, and our legacy regardless of what we have done in our lives. Certainly, there is no denial here that temporal legacies exist, yet, in the broadest sense these do not apply here because they are not of the eternal.

Everything that we know is destined to be forgotten at some point in time. This much is a fact. Once the human race dies out completely, which at some point it undoubtedly will, we will no longer have a legacy to look back upon. The forces of nature will eventually overtake mankind's creations, and force the overbrush into every nook, and cranny of life's memorials. Each one of us will face eternity at the moment of death, and all things will have already been lost to us forever. This loss is permanent, and cannot be brought back in any way, as the body has been destroyed completely in death.

At some point, the entirety of the Earth shall be one giant graveyard in the cosmic scheme of things. Pyramids, temples, churches, and civic buildings will eventually crumble or be buried underneath new vegetation long after we all cease to exist. Even books will hold no significant value, as they will also be destroyed by the ravages of time, and dust. Truthfully, it can be said that everything we have ever known will eventually be completely, and utterly destroyed. Let us keep this in mind as we delve deeper into consciousness, and our understanding of being. Our consciousness, and general awareness, are dependent on this knowledge.

When we delve deeper into the possibilities of the construct of the self, we realize soon enough that we have the ability to re-create our lives through the power of the will. It is the will which gives us pause to look at life from a more nuanced perspective. This perspective keeps us honest with ourselves in that we then can then realize that everything we know about our lives is patently false. What I mean here is that it is the construct of the self which has been built up for us in this life, and it is easily disassembled by the mind when deeply, and profoundly, meditating upon it. We think we know the answers as to who we are, but in the end, when (and if) we are fortunate or unfortunate enough to live to old age, we will soon realize that our identity is as fluid as anything else in this world.

There are gray areas to life which present themselves to us on a daily basis. These gray areas are numerous, and consist of moral judgments, ethical conundrums, and interpersonal relationships, as well as the general behavior of the individual. When we consider all these things, it becomes clear that we can only act in our best interests, or in what we perceive to be our best interests as all things are concerned. There is no doubt that philanthropy exists, as this is demonstrated daily through the kindness of others, but we also must look at the possibility that we are also wired towards selfishness.

As we age, we progressively are able to see things from perspectives which we had not considered in our youth. It is from these new, fresh perspectives that the individual is able to grow exponentially on a psychological, as well as foundational level. One of the great mysteries of life shows itself when we are continuously being challenged regarding our beliefs, convictions, and ideas of reality. Human rights, for example, are also being challenged around the world on a consistent basis. There is an evolving idea of self-sovereignty which is not ecumenically received throughout the world. In old age, we think of not only the possibilities of time which has escaped us, but also of those things which we would still like to do whilst we live. This sort of thinking can also happen in one's youth to a degree, and this is shown by individual temperaments early on.

Self-awareness is the basis for despair, regardless of how some of us may choose to look at the world, and life, around us. We can find ourselves getting lost in the discomfort of not knowing what the future holds, or what is in store for us after death. These concepts can bother us to the point that we become distracted in a fundamental way. Our psychological makeup is continuously being challenged by our understanding of this life, and the lack of insight into purpose, and meaning.

There is a certain heaviness in feeling to the concept that we are uniquely positioned to wonder about our purpose in this universe. This heaviness of feeling is part of a feature of human experience that is unique to us specifically. We experience nuance in this world, and in our daily interactions with others. There is no black, and white here. Ultimately, it is up to us to decide how we are going to look at the world, and our flaws as human beings. These flaws are characterized by a lack of insight into purpose, and meaning.

Other than the construct of the self, there is no other way to remediate the problems presented by life than to re-create one's own individuality from the ground up. Doing so, of course, is psychologically dangerous because it represents the upending of the foundations of the individual. Each one of us is fragile in the sense that psychologically we can easily be harmed in our views of life. It is through this harm that the individual then can exhibit signs of mental illness, or some other malady of the mind which is now rudderless.

It is in this rudderless reality that we find ourselves struggling day to day to etch out some form of meaningful existence. Some of us find purpose in our careers, whilst others look toward childrearing for meaning. Others merely exist, and attempt to fill the void of being with meaningless experiences, and various temporal distractions. This is why self-awareness is not only the basis for despair, but it is the foundational starting point for suffering which can only be experienced uniquely by the individual in question. Each one of us has the capacity to receive a great deal of suffering, and experience unbelievable pain.

# Chapter Two



## *How Self-Awareness Defines Us as Human*

Human experience forces us to look at the world in a way that is beyond black, and white. There is a vision of life here that seems to be filled with chaos, and confusion. Even though this is the case, we find ourselves looking inward towards the perception of the self which is ingrained in us. This perception is part of what we represent to the world, and what we represent to ourselves. We have to be willing to look at the world from multiple angles in order to better understand where it is that we are coming from, and where we are going.

To be human is to be imperfect, flawed, and filled with self-deception at every corner of the Earth. This is our lot in the world, and we cannot do anything about it except meditate, or think on possible theories of being, and essence. There are many ways that we can deceive ourselves just by living out our daily existence. Some of these ways include having a false impression of one's own personality, or way of being, as well as looking at the world with myopic views.

We cannot afford to waste our lives in such a manner that we do not examine the essence behind what it means to be human. If we do not examine life from a more profound point of view, we are then destined to experience suffering in an even more pronounced way than if we were to choose to be more cognizant of our lot in this universe. The world owes us nothing, and the universe is indifferent to our cries of anguish. This is one of the first principles of life that we must understand in order to develop cognitively in a balanced way. As I have said, we tend to look at the world with a myopic view of life, and it can be said that part of that is beyond our control. The reason I say this is that we cannot be aware of everything.

Self-awareness defines us as human simply because it is a feature of the human intellect. We gather every ounce of energy we have into trying to decipher our greater purpose in this world when we cannot find the answer to that question in the first place. All things which include purpose, and truth, are self-created experiences, thoughts, and ideas stemming from the mind of one who wishes to imbue their lives with meaning. What I am trying to say here is that it is from within that meaning appears, and it can only be from the construct of the self that purpose becomes evident.

This purpose, which is highly personal in nature, is set apart from the disposition of the outside world. This is because the outside world is unfeeling, uncaring, and indifferent to our base needs. It is through the power of the constructed self that we are able to determine the value of our own lives, and works. This is part of the great tragedy of existence in that we are, whilst we live, bound endlessly to the comforts that only individuals can provide for themselves. These comforts are psychological in nature for the most part, and do not involve material things as such.

Even if we were to assume that purpose, and meaning are elements of this world, we are engaged in actively deceiving ourselves. This engagement keeps us from finding true meaning, which is subjective in nature, and thus far away from being universal. Each one of us has a different purpose based on environmental, social, and genetic factors. These factors are solidified through our personalities which are almost as varied as there are grains of sand in the world.

Our imperfections keep us humbled in the sense that we must experience our flaws for ourselves even if we deny those flaws publicly. We know ourselves more than we think we do, and we also know that there are features of our personalities which detract from the experience of purpose. Think of all those times where you have doubted yourself, and were uncertain about your place in this world. It is through times such as these that we must attempt to hold onto ideas, concepts, and thoughts which bring value to our lives. In daily life we are constantly being challenged on a psychological level to rise above our circumstances emotionally.

But there are no easy ways to explain how it is we are to rise above, as it were, and claim our stake in this world. Even if we accomplish a tremendous amount of work towards the betterment of humanity, we still have an ephemeral influence on the outside world. There are, of course, exceptions to this (to a degree), yet these exceptions are only temporarily so in the grand scheme of things. Our focus in this life matters a great deal because it is in what we search for that determines our outlook in general.

As we look toward the future, and the possibilities it may bring, we must also concentrate on the present because it is where we exist at all times. Our minds are such that we fret about both the past, as well as the future, and hardly find ourselves in the fortunate situation to be able to truly live in the present. We are continuously preoccupied with concerns that are often not certain to come to pass, and this is something which also detracts us from being able to live authentically in the present.

These scenarios of human thought are, of course, based upon the idea that we are continuously worried about what is to come, and also that which has affected us in the past. This is not to say that it is not valuable to look at the past as a learning experience for us. It is certain that it is. However, if we merely focus on the past in a way that affects us in our present state of being, then we will have missed the point of those lessons we should have learned about life. Similarly, if we fret about the future, we will not be able to successfully navigate our daily lives without a great deal of anguish.

It is through pain, and anguish, that we learn something valuable about ourselves; that we are not immortal, we are not perfect, and we are certainly weak in many respects. Though there are examples of greatness in humanity to be found in the annals of time, and through research, it is clear that even magnificent works of art or literature will crumble in the sands of eternity one day. This realization should easily provide a sobering attitude for the astute individual that is able to see just how naked mankind truly is under the vast starry skies. Humanity has always been in a state of constant change, adaptation, and evolution but we still are missing something vital.

The vital thing of which I speak relates to the judgment of the individual against the fullness of the truth that the universe represents. We are at odds with the universe in the sense that we believe we have solved tremendous mysteries regarding nature, and matter, yet we still do not understand consciousness. This is what is vital in life; the conceptualization that consciousness has an important role to play in the development of humanity as a whole. We have certainly made great strides throughout our relatively short history on Earth, but we do not understand beyond the basic biological explanation behind consciousness.

Is there something beyond the basic fundamental concepts of what we know to be true regarding sentience? I believe that it is possible, and it is certainly credible to think that consciousness could also be central to the uncovering of further mysteries regarding this life. Nonetheless, it is easy to understand why some scientists may be dismissive of any further talk regarding consciousness beyond the fundamentally known. This is understandable, because if we cannot measure something, or know for certain that it is replicable, how can we know for certain that something exists or is even real?

We know that brainwaves exist, and various technological advancements have achieved an incredible understanding of the brain itself. What is missing here is a look into the subjective side of consciousness whereby individuals form an impression of the world around themselves. The subjective, alongside the symbolic, provides ample grounds for the exploration of the mind. Human beings are lonely creatures in that we exist mostly inside of our own heads.

Even though we have the capacity to care for others, and empathize by nature, we cannot see the world as it truly is because we are stuck in our own view of what the truth of reality consists of. Beyond mere theory, it is easy to see how the subjective mind has the power to influence individuals as well as influence one's outlook on what is perceived to be reality. The subjective is powerful in that it can easily influence behavior, as well as our interactions with others in general.

Our reality is colored by many facets of circumstance, position, and points of view that are built upon the individual through subjectivity. It is through subjectivity that we find ourselves at the mercy of our minds. We can imagine the tamest of situations being very difficult, and there is a chance that we can become consumed with anxiety because of it. Anxiety here represents a formal departure from objectivity because of its reliance on subjective thoughts, ideals, and hints of possible outcomes that haunt us. As individuals we develop a certain strength of being from the subjective, and this is because we are often able to heal our mental wounds with thoughts of individualized positive regard.

Positive regard is not merely a concept, but a tool that can be utilized by the individual to help heal from painful experiences. When we are introspective, and decide to give ourselves positive self-talk, we are engaging in a form of healing which is broadly underestimated. By this, I mean that the very idea of self-actualization is found through this form of self-conditioning. It can be very consoling to have this sort of thing in one's own mental repertoire. The self, although merely a construct, becomes renewed through personal sacrifice, and meditation upon conscious awareness.

From ancient times, before the advent of written history, we can imagine our ancestors in a situation where they had similar thoughts to us regarding purpose. Undoubtedly there was a belief in superstition, as well as other imaginative ideas that helped with the existential survival of early humans. Some may have felt the same level of despair that many of us feel when we look out onto the vastness of space, and realize just how small we truly are.

Indeed, we are not only small, but hardly significant in terms of cosmic import. The same rule applies to other animals, vegetation, and even the very soil of the Earth itself. The weight of this realization is extremely difficult to understand because as a species we habitually seek out meaning in every situation we encounter. If we do not have cosmic importance, then it follows that we must create our own meaning.

The creation of our own meaning gives us pause to focus on those things which vex us about the world around us. We are continuously in a situation where there is conflict. This conflict is either directed towards us, or peripherally, and often prevents us from channeling the power of the will toward a self-directed end. The conflicts I speak of relate to internal mental anguish, external situations, as well as a combination of both subjective, and objective aspects of being.

Our ability to endure suffering is greater than we might first assume, and this is because our species goes through so much of it on a physical as well as mental level. To suffer is to understand on an unconscious level that we are connected fundamentally to one another by virtue of the pain we experience. Although we experience suffering in isolation through our own subjective way of looking at things, we still have a connection with others on a basic level which needs to be scrutinized further.

Through the experience of isolation the individual is able to learn about their own personality, as well as psychological makeup. It is through introspection that there is a powerful advantage one can wield in this world, and this is because all self-evident truth emanates from within. We learn about the world around us, but it does not provide us with anything profound that we can understand about humanity other than facts, and figures. We are more than statistics. We experience feelings, emotions, and all sorts of connections are made with others through the power of the subjective.

Someday, there will be nothing but ruins as far as the eye can see along with a vast swath of foliage burying old buildings, homes, and centers of commerce. This is the ultimate apocalypse which is separate from individual revelation. What I mean here is that long after our deaths, all trace of humanity will be eventually wiped out amid the underbrush of flora, and fauna. This recognition is important because it provides each one of us with a certain accountability for our own destiny. We cannot control everything that happens to us, or even most of what occurs, but we certainly can decide to create meaningful experiences where there are none.

Our lot in this world is to suffer deeply on a psychological, as well as a physical level in some manner that is consistent with other biological life. Pain itself is positive, as Schopenhauer proclaimed, and this is because it is in the absence of suffering that there is a negative force. This force can lead to boredom, or even psychological distress because of a lack of positive suffering. This is not to say that suffering, and pain are things to look forward to. I am simply stating that pain is positive because it represents a force of change that affects each one of us on a profound level.

This profundity of experience keeps us honest with ourselves in that it becomes clear that through the endurance of pain we grow as individuals. We might not like this explanation, but it doesn't necessarily make it any less true. As I have previously stated, we have moments of pleasure in this life, it is just that the pain outweighs anything else we could possibly experience. If we are fortunate enough to die relatively peacefully in our own beds it will be enough to satiate the inner need for the reduction of suffering to nothingness.

To enter into nothingness is to concentrate on the void of non-being. This can be done through meditation upon our station in life, as well as visualizing what it might be like to experience the dying process on a personal level. When we allow ourselves to visualize, think upon, and reflect on those things which are of the nature of death, we can then begin to live authentically in this world.

What does it mean to be authentic? It simply is a statement that reflects the idea that we should follow our true will which stems from inner desires made apparent to us in our daily lives. The will, being powerful in itself, drives us toward life, as well as death. Both aspects of human experience are of extreme importance here because it is through living that we learn about situational awareness, and it is through a concentration on death that we become humbled as individuals. This humility is authentic because it stems from a place where there is an unclouded judgment on behalf of the individual. To explain further, I mean that once we choose to look at life, and death, as one and the same, then we become self-liberated.

Self-liberation is found through a conscious effort to grow as an individual on a psychological, as well as subjective level. These efforts are self-directed in that it is only through one's own personal drive that any change can be made. By realizing this great personal responsibility through action we can create an antidote to the despair that exists due to understanding that the world is inherently meaningless. The world does not seem to have an ultimate purpose, or goal, other than continual expressions of life, and death in harmony with one another.

It is in the realization of our stark nakedness that we become truly humbled by our station in life. We are smaller than specks of dust in the cosmic scope of things, and our ability to rationalize the world around us doesn't do us much good when we think about it. If this seems pessimistic it certainly is. There is, I admit, a sense of hope to be found in self-directed goals, and through the natural wonder found in life. Death itself can be a manifestation of hope, and positivity when looked at from a mature point of view.

Cosmologically, we find ourselves in this dimension of being through each, and every experience of pain, grief, and hopelessness. It is through these three things that reality reminds us continuously of just how peaceful the void of non-being may possibly be. Before we were born there was nothing to hope for, nor was there any semblance of pain, and suffering. This is redemption; in that we shall one day find death, and embrace eternity with open arms rather than fear.

Everything in this physical universe consists of a cacophony of dying, and dead matter. Self-awareness keeps us cognizant of this truth, especially because it is formed from the very recesses of our own being from birth. Perhaps there is some profound truth to the idea that we can ancestrally understand death through a focus on the primitive aspects of our own thoughts, ideas, and feelings. If this is so, it means that we are cosmically connected with death on a psychological level, and can potentially understand our place in the universe a little better. It is possible that the symbolism we think of in our minds is connected with death as well.

We are human because we think, and because we are biologically, and evolutionarily of a species which has adapted an understanding of death as being inevitable. These aspects of our nature are fundamental in that they continuously exist for us behind the scenes at all times in our subjective minds. As I have mentioned before, there is a dichotomy between the objective, and subjective, and this is expressed also through us as human beings. Each one of us is tainted by our understanding of mortality, and every conversation, experience, and life event is reduced to this fact.

Nonetheless, we are here, we exist, and we live if only for a time in this world. There is suffering to be found in the understanding of our mortality. Even thinking about death is a form of internal suffering which is ever present with us. Our tears are not enough to redeem us, but they keep us sober, nevertheless. Only death can become our ultimate redeemer, but until then we must carry on, and live life with a self-created purpose. Self-education is an important ethical concept because it is through learning about the world around us that we are able to better make it through this life.

We must have foundations for ourselves in this world, and this is certain because we are often rudderless in the void of space, and time. If our foundations are built upon self-awareness, as well as personal research into the fundamental nature of the human experience, then we can face death stoically, and with peace in our hearts. It is here, within the moment that we find ourselves searching for the truth, that we can then come to realize that all things have an ultimate end.

In the void of non-being, there is a distinction that should be made in contrast to that which is objectively existing. This distinction is one in which individuals lose all sense of being, and there is no coming back from where we go. Consciousness, wherever it goes, is no longer an equation within the brain of the dead human. It is an aspect which can no longer be commented on, and this is because it is currently beyond the realm of current scientific knowledge. Because it is outside of our common knowledge, we cannot fathom what might happen to it after death.

As I have previously pointed out, there is no black, and white in the story of the human race. There are only gray areas where some things are shaded darker than others, and where we have to make daily decisions based on subjective facts. These subjective facts are tainted by the mind, and the way we process things because they were once objectively known to us. What I mean here is that the facts we come across in our lives are influenced so much by subjectivity that they become muddled. We can no longer know the real weight, value, or substance when it comes to the truth, and this is because of the subjective dimension.

The subjectivity we experience makes us simultaneously human, as well as prone to errors. We constantly make decisions that have serious consequences for them even when we are unaware of just how serious these may be. Some of our decision making is based on the inconsequential as well, and this is shown through the countless ways that we come up with ideas, thoughts, and actions that do not represent a heavy weight outside of our own direct sphere of influence.

When we look outside of ourselves, and truly attempt to make decisions that are based on objective facts, we sometimes find ourselves in a position where we do indeed make a change in the outside world. It is during those times that we may be challenged in our own thoughts regarding the illusory sense of control we possess. This illusory sense of control is one of the aspects of human experience that keeps us from ultimately killing ourselves. When we no longer focus on the illusory, we become filled with despair, and are unable to bargain with that which no longer exists for us.

Death, being the ultimate answer to our equation regarding the ephemeral nature of human existence, then becomes a symbol for the truth we must face. The truth represents that we are stark naked under the seemingly endless stars, and we are without foundation. As we are without foundation, we search aimlessly for that which will give us purpose. As I have mentioned before, we can create meaningful experiences, meaning, and purpose, but these things can only be individually crafted for ourselves.

# Chapter Three



## Reflections on Consciousness, and the Objective World

Consciousness is an enigma, and it is also something which we have continuously pursued answers to in the history of mankind. It is throughout mankind's existence that sentient thought has been seen as being either taboo, or of a nature that cannot be fully understood. In truth, it is that conscious thought has gotten the better of us throughout time. We must choose whether or not we decide to investigate further those aspects of being which relate to conscious awareness. Our lack of insight into the matter does not seem to stop us from continuing to look into consciousness from both a scientific, and theoretical viewpoint.

The world around us can be objectively known, and understood, in a way that is both scientifically sound as well as mathematically calculated. The scientific aspect of consciousness is found in the search for neurons, synapses, and connections which are made in the brain, and can be studied from a physical perspective. Mathematically, it must follow that we are subjected to the physical limitations of this world which can be seen in an objective way.

There is no place here for god, or gods, in the sense that we have traditionally understood them. Everything we experience is the result of the chaotic forces that exist in this world that push our will towards action. Although we might find it hard to fathom the possibility that we are without a cosmic purpose, there is a truth that is revealed to us when we do consider it. This truth is based on the conceptualization that the cosmology of the world is not human-centric, and is indeed quite remote from being so. We have physical bodies which interact with the outside world, but the forces of being do not answer the questions that we seek.

Are we destined to live without a purpose? This is a question that can only be answered by the individual because it is through the strength of will that we find ourselves overtaken by the power of the mind. The individual mind is subjective in nature, and is part, and parcel of the world around us in a fundamental way. This fundamental nature comes before the understanding of death in a way that it is both conceptual, and formative in how we view the world.

Our vision of the world is a lonely one because it involves an understanding of personal decision making that resonates only on a small level with the individual. We can only imagine what true reality might consist of beyond our senses, and this is because we can only see as far as our mind is willing to take us into said reality. There are only a few things that we can perceive as being true, and they relate to physics, mathematics, and scientific processes which are continuously being looked at, and scrutinized.

The conscious mind is damned to experience the world not as it is, but as we are able to experience it. What I mean here is that it is through our limitations that we know about the world, and can understand concepts relating to being. These limitations provoke us in a way that keeps us focused on those blind spots in human consciousness that cannot be accounted for. These blind spots are where consciousness resides ultimately, and this is because we cannot fully understand the true nature of what the self, or the construct of being truly consists of.

Our constructed minds are the result of environmental and biological factors combined with sociological aspects of human contact. It is through these things that we find ourselves locked into the limitations of human understanding regarding life, purpose, and cosmology in general. The cosmology of being represents far more than we currently understand regarding the truth of life. As we journey through this world, and experience those processes of the human lifespan, we learn pieces of the truth which can then be understood individually but not as a whole. We are not in a position to decipher the fullness of the world around us.

Because we are not in a position to decipher the entirety of the universe we inhabit, we fall into a sort of cosmic despair which can be felt by everybody. There is perhaps a certain pessimism involved with cosmic questions because there is only so much that we can quantify, understand, and relate with on a fundamental level. I keep on referring to the fundamental because it is with what we can know about the universe that we are able to find ourselves with some form of foundation to step on. What I mean by this is that it is through our search for answers that we find that there is a foundation available to us, and that is through scientific inquiry.

Science has only brought us so far in our quest for fundamental understanding of life, cosmology, and time. There are stopgaps within our understanding that can only be hoped to be resolved through theoretical ideas that manifest as part of a logical thought process. Even these stopgaps, however, cannot be understood at this time fully. We are currently able to process knowledge in a way that meets our expectations to a degree about how the universe functions. We have knowledge of theorems, ideas, and concepts that have helped us grow exponentially in the past one hundred years beyond our past understanding of the cosmos.

Still, we cannot determine why it is that we are here as conscious beings beyond the biological imperatives laid down through DNA sequencing, and evolutionary traits. This lack of knowledge keeps us from truly understanding the world around us. We are lost, and adrift away from any shore when it comes to our theoretical journey as a species. The more we understand about the world, the less we truly are able to define consciousness because it is such an enigma.

Death challenges us because it causes us to be hyper-aware of the need to be present in any given moment. This is a psychological concept in that there are aspects of the human mind that can only truly flourish when one chooses to live in the moment. Perhaps this is one clue as to why some of the sages of old focused on the here, and now, rather than the past or the possible future.

Human awareness is cultivated throughout the process of an individual's lifespan. From birth we are aware of our surroundings to a degree, and we continue to learn throughout our natural years. This awareness takes us to mental places where we are able to cognitively develop as individuals, alongside the help of environmental, and other factors. Our socialization with others from an early age is crucial for us to grow into maturity successfully from a psychological perspective. The truth of *being* is only partially discovered in our lifetimes, and continues to be a source of contention amongst philosophers, and the scientific community at large.

Nothing we can do can change our way of thinking unless we will it to be changed through our innermost desires. It is through desire that the will is proclaimed as being supreme. Our thirst for knowledge keeps us discovering new theories, ideas, and thoughts regarding our place in the world as human beings. Each thought that we have allows us to continue to deepen our understanding of the world as it appears to us on a fundamental level.

Education can, of course, assist the individual in one's own journey toward this deeper understanding. Whether this is done through self-education, or through formal learning, there are aspects of science that can be understood ecumenically. This ecumenism of thought broadens our own awareness of the world, and simultaneously connects us with other perceptions, and objective knowledge. When we are connected to ideas that can be decidedly seen as objective, we anchor ourselves to a groundwork of understanding which is profoundly apparent to us.

This groundwork is the basis for our foundations in this world, of which the objective truth is but one facet. Subjectivism also plays a role in human perception because of the powerful symbolism found in personal abstractions regarding how we see the world as a composite reality. The composite reality that is created through objective, and subjective means, forms the basis for our sentience on a deeper level. To clarify, it is in this theory necessary to broaden our knowledge through dichotomous forces.

Dr. Sigmund Freud, in his work *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, declares in the first person that “I cannot conceive why wisdom, which is, so to speak, the sediment of everyday experiences, should be denied admission among the acquisitions of knowledge. For it is not the diversity of objects but the stricter method of verification and the striving for far reaching connections which make up the essential character of scientific work.” For Freud, when we look for these connections, and verify what we know through the scientific method, we are recognizing that there is a scheme by which we can absorb information as well as theoretical ideas coherently.

This coherence is found in a marriage of the known, and the unknown, as well as the utilization of logic, and reason to get to where we need to be intellectually. Everything exists in dichotomous scenarios. There is night, and day, life, and death, and everything in between. Psychologically, we must accept that there is a connection between the void of non-being, and that of life itself. This connection is played out in our world as that of being opposing forces, and this is rightly proclaimed to be as such. However, it must also be stated that without these opposing forces we would not have the dynamics of life as we know it.

Life will find a way. It always does. So does death. Everything we were before we were born was nothing but void, and did not consist of natural substance. When we die, we will return to this void which cannot be known, or understood, in purely objective terms. In other words, we will have crossed beyond known scientific knowledge into an indescribable absence of being. This is at the same time horrific, as well as an amazing thought, and this is because we will have ceased to exist as we know it.

Wisdom can be discovered through realizing that we are prone to error, and deficient in our own understanding of the nature of life. There are many questions that arise when we discuss the nature of consciousness, and this is shown through the many theories that underline its essential nature. The essential nature of consciousness is not fully known as of yet, but we do have the physical sciences to help us understand cognition.

There is a symbolism that is always present in our understanding of objective truths. This symbolism is often abstract, and paints a picture of reality as being something both unique to the individual, as well as shared by the rest of humanity. There are aspects to the human mind that are connected with shaping our intellectual abilities in such a manner that we integrate conscious, as well as unconscious processes when navigate the physical world. It is in the physical world that we are destined to discover all that we can in our limited nature about objective realities. Objective realities are those shared, duplicable, and known factors of the causal world which we all can agree we are bound to at least on some fundamental level.

Similarly, there is a subjective reflex in the mind that prods us towards molding our understanding of reality into complexities that force us out of our comfort zones. By this, I mean that the subjective processing of information solidifies an additional dimensional quality to the human experience. Human beings are capable of understanding the world from multiple dimensions of thought, ideal, and expression. These factors push us toward a shared, yet isolated view of the world which simultaneously exists as another dichotomous force.

Idealism keeps us as human beings focused on those factors which are conducive to longevity, whereas the death impulse widens our view of experience to include that of those moribund processes that we will eventually succumb to. In truth, death is a liberating force for us because it opens up possibilities of a peaceful non-existence beyond the care, and worry of this current life. Nonetheless, it must be said that our idealism, instinct, and habitual natures only add to the impulse towards survival. Even though we know that we shall someday die, our impulse is to continue regardless of the eventual outcome.

Our foreknowledge of death presses us to discover new truths regarding the objective world. This is because we unconsciously realize that our time here is limited, and so we must choose to educate ourselves regarding the nature of life, or not. This is a highly individualized choice because it involves personal agency.

When we shed ourselves of the excess baggage of assumptions, and courageously look out onto the world with an eagerness to learn that is insurmountable, we then can authentically begin to live in the moment. This is harder than it may seem because it requires one to shift one's mind away from reflecting on the past, or fretting about the future. By divesting oneself of the irrational, there is only the essence of reason, and logic remaining. This does not mean that the irrational should be ignored, or seen as something that does not have educational value. The mind can seem irrational at times, yet it is capable of tremendous discoveries in the realms of science, architecture, and art.

Aesthetics speak to us as human beings because we are drawn toward that which utilizes the subjective nature of the individual mind. Aesthetic qualities are as numerous as can be, and at the same time these things remain constant in our lives on some level. We can express ourselves through artistic means such as literature, painting, and theater, and these things are all well, and good. Yet, we must dive deeper into the manifestation of the aesthetic if we are to truly understand its influence upon us.

As the aesthetic is expressed in various ways inclusive of mode of dress, it is all-encompassing for us in a very credible way. What I mean by this is that our existential crises as human beings can find their way into our aesthetic choices in this life, and it can consume us profoundly. We are continually faced with one crisis after another, however serious or banal in nature. This is perhaps another tragedy of human existence; that we experience traumas on multiple levels irrespective of who we are, or think we are.

It is very humbling to imagine that an aesthetic is part, and parcel of human experience. This is because it is an outward manifestation of the inner subjectivism which we experience individually. Because we all experience the subjective, it can be said to be an aspect of cognition that is universal in nature. It holds a place in the world, alongside the objective in a very tangible way.

We cannot speak of the objective without the subjective because both concepts are uniquely expressed within human experience. These things are evident in that we are prone to error even in promoting one theory over another, or in judging a situation (but not impartially.) The aspects of internalization through the subjective are as follows: each one of us individually thinks, and judges, and that the cognition of one's own brain interprets the objective in a specialized way.

This interpretation brings with it a flaw in that we cannot hope to perceive the objective with untainted eyes. We can know facts, and figures, but we often do not see their importance in our lives in a non-biased way. Our biases confirm our inability to rationalize the irrational. As a species, we are destined, it seems, to know only a peripheral portion of the truth behind the visible universe.

It is as if we were playing a game of chess, where the board is representative of a three-dimensional space. This space is where our minds operate, and the pieces are likened to neurons in the brain. We can only perceive that which is on the board, but not what lies beyond the spaces of it. It also follows that, like chess, there are functional rules in place that cannot be violated. These are restrictions, and can be likened to the ones we experience in our day-to-day lives.

Returning to the aesthetic qualities of human experience, let us also think about the potential that it has to inform us of our own subjective way of experiencing the world around us. We navigate a world of physical matter which can be known through scientific scrutiny. This much is true. However, what is also true is that there is a distinction between human educational processes (such as early socialization), and that which is perceived in a specific manner by the individual. It is possible, in other words, that my experience of color, taste, sight, and sound is far different than that of another individual. I may know that the color blue is supposed to be blue, but I cannot say with certainty whether or not someone else experiences that color in a different way. What I mean to say here is that individuals experience the objective in a very peculiar way.

There is a tremendous responsibility on behalf of the individual as to how the world is seen, navigated, and learned of. This responsibility stems from primitive desires within the constructs of the self that guides the will. If we do not choose to accept this responsibility, then by all means, it is something that simply does not have to be accepted. But in denying the responsibility of perception the individual deceives themselves. Our only tether to this world is through our perception, and this is found through the inner workings of the mind.

Many of the consequences that human beings face in life are related to constructs which are placed in our paths. These constructs range from laws to decrees, and everything in between on a sociological level. We are faced with an insurmountable number of difficulties that we must navigate in this life that are set up by other human beings institutionally. These difficulties are placed in our path irrespective of where we find ourselves in this world. All of us are bound to face difficulties which challenge us in the objective world. We, of course, internalize these difficulties, and sometimes make them out to be more complex than they truly are. This is part of human nature to begin with.

In addition to those constructs that challenge us are the natural, biologically founded realities that we must contend with. To explain briefly, I mean that we also have to deal with pathological realities that can eventually harm us, or even kill us. Diseases, viruses, and other health concerns are also obstacles in our way that keep us from being able to function properly. There is great sorrow to be found in this recognition of the truth about the human body. We are weaklings in that we easily succumb to illness, and even our mind is not safe from the effects of pain.

Regardless of the obstacles that prevent us from being able to function properly, whether these things are sociological in origin, or biological, we must concern ourselves with functioning at a base level. This form of functioning allows us to continue our search for purpose regardless of obstructions in our way. To be able to fight against the odds is a very human response to such maladies.

Though we cannot fully understand the nature of consciousness, we have a choice to continue on in this world despite the odds ruling against our favor. This choice is part of the limited will which manifests itself into reality through the power of individual desire. Desire keeps us motivated to challenge ourselves, and move forward with our lives regardless of whether or not we will succeed in our plans.

For every successful idea, theory, or concept, there are countless ones which are cast to the wayside because of flaws in logic or reason. We are, as I have previously explained, flawed individuals with characters that are even more precariously balanced against the fulcrum of existence before us. Against the enormity of the eternal we become painfully aware of the inconsequential nature of our existence, and this is more poignantly seen during times of great suffering, and anguish.

The objective world is calculated, unfeeling, and of a nature which is mathematically, as well as physically distinct. This world carries us through our days as we grow, and mature as individuals. Because of evolution we are able to conceive of culture, theoretical complexities, language, and other related features of human existence. All of these things come together to form the fullness of what it means to be sentient. We cannot perceive this fullness of sentience even though we experience it to a great degree in our advanced state of evolution.

There is a tremendous sorrow to the realization that though we are sentient, we are not permanent in our state of biological life. Everything changes, including our bodies, and minds, over time. These changes profoundly affect us in a manner that allows us to perceive the whittling away of time in front of our faces. It is through this perception that the stark reality of human nature unfolds in front of us. Death is all around us, and penetrates the very heart of all creativity, scientific inquiry, and societal progression. The unconscious mind rallies around death as a focal point that is beyond the stale abstractions that we are used to surrounding ourselves with. It is with these abstractions that we realize that there are severe blind-spots in the perceptual abilities of our brains.

# Chapter Four



## How the Subjective, and Objective Work in Tandem

The subjective, and objective are unique features of reality in that they compose a composite framework, or schema, to the fabric of the knowable. When we process objective truths internally, we then subjectively look introspectively to search for meaning in the physical world. These features bring to light the characteristics of multiple facets of reality which are experienced uniquely by us as human beings. Our ability to comprehend scientific concepts such as gravity, and mass, has changed irrevocably into a subjective form of comprehension.

All these concepts are very human because they require a bridging of perspectives that creates a composite reality for us. This composite reality is first, and foremost, dependent on human cognition. That is not to say that objective reality is dependent on us at all. Far from it. Our perception of reality, being composite, is one in which is necessarily based on rational thought, and internal processes. These processes formulate the basis of what we can *know* about reality.

Reality, being both distinct from, and intimate with the subjective, is of a nature that is physical, and unique to our perception of things. By this I mean that reality, as we can define it, is processed within our brains. Because of this, we could be incorrect about the true nature of the outside world to the degree that we are not able to know the truth for what it actually is. Our ability to grasp this concept is shaky at best, and that is because we often tend to believe that what we experience with our senses is the true representation of the object(s) before us. It could be that we are all forced to view reality similarly to one another simply because we all share the same senses.

Reality is complex because there are three distinct concepts that we are discussing here. These concepts are the following: shared objective reality, subjectively processed reality, and composite reality which combines the objective, and subjective together. Shared objective reality represents what the senses can tell us about the world around us. Subjectively processed realities are based on the individual rather than the whole in terms of how we take in the information before us. Composite reality takes the form of individual with universal experience.

When I say universal experience, I am referring to what everyone can possibly know about facts, figures, and other concrete truths as they are represented in the outside world. Distinctions must be made, and understood, about the tenuous grasp we have on reality, versus what it truly represents for us as human beings. This is a complex subject to tackle, but it is one in which it is necessary for us to explore further the subtleties of reality.

We perceive reality, but we only know the calculations, and physics of what it consists of. Perhaps we are missing something in the bigger picture. This is something that we may have to come to terms with; that we are destined to see myopically regarding reality. There are so many blind spots in our perceptual world that we can only imagine what the fullness of reality represents for us, and beyond that, for the cosmos at large. I do not intend to go into the metaphysical, for the concerns that I have here relate strictly to the dichotomous forces extant in objectivity, and subjectivity.

These dichotomous forces color our perception, and allow us to cognitively process several dimensions of reality at once. The causal, and the acausal represent the physical essence of being, and that of non-being. Similarly, the objective represents reality as we perceive it ecumenically, whilst the subjective is a filtered form of reality unique to ourselves. These are the distinctions that I am saying are important to make regarding any theorization about objective reality. Consciousness plays a role in our unique take on what discovered truths about the world represent. Our ability to *perceive* in general allows for these discoveries to be made.

Perception is flawed at best, and must be viewed suspiciously by the individual because of how it represents the world around us. By this, I mean that what we think we know about the world is skewed by the limitations of our senses. We all know cognitively that there are foundational truths which can be understood by the senses. This much is certain. Yet, at the same time our subjective way of learning about the world conceals much from our eyes about the whole truth. It is possible that someday we may learn additional facets of the truth regarding reality, but how we are going to get there is a question for another time.

In the world of the senses, we are like partially blind creatures that only perceive a modicum of the truth behind knowable reality. When we look at all that we have been able to decipher regarding the sciences, historical facts, and other forms of knowledge, we see a picture that simultaneously makes sense, and also does not. What I am trying to get at here is that there is a tremendous handicap that exists in our current methods of perceiving the world based on our limited biological natures.

Let us consider for a moment whether there may be a way to unlock the mysteries surrounding currently unknown realities. If this is possible, we would have to augment our senses to a degree that human biological forces alone have not provided for us. There would have to be some form of engineering, medical advancements, and technological theories which then give us the ability to perceive more of reality before us. If this were possible, we then may find ourselves in a situation where we have to adapt to additional paradigms of truth.

It is through the contemplation of reality that we now find ourselves begging the question of whether we can know more about what makes the world the way it is. Perhaps we are not meant to know the absolute truth regarding the world around us. If we did, it is possible that we would not be able to handle the fullness of reality before us. One theory is that it could be possible that our senses have evolved the way they did so that our brains would be able to handle a construct of reality that may only be partially visible.

Objectively, we are in a world where the laws of physics apply, and we are locked inside of our bodies in a sense that we can only obey the rules of nature. Our imaginations invoke in us all sorts of ideas, thoughts, and theoretical possibilities but we do not know the extent to which our imaginations are true or false. This is one of the greatest conundrums of all of human history in that we cannot always perceive fact from fiction. It is likely that throughout the course of several lifetimes there will be only a certain modicum of progress relating to the expansion of our perceptions.

We are trapped in our bodies whilst we live, and at the same time we depend on our biological natures to provide for us a form of consciousness that is tangible (at least to a certain extent.) This is a description of just how imprisoned we truly are in our state of sentience. None of us can escape biological reality, and know if consciousness continues to somehow function. Death, being an enigma, keeps us on our toes in the sense that we continuously seek to augment our realities in the limited time we have here on this Earth.

The world will continue to exist without us, and this basic knowledge is enough to humble us in our heart of hearts. As civilizations come, and go, the sands of time continue to flow through the vastness of space. These thoughts are simply those that resonate with the rest of humanity because in the depths of our being we are cognizant of these things. None of us will escape death. Still, we struggle to make sense of the world around us whilst we live, and this is evident through our continual striving towards scientific discovery.

Science has brought us quite far in the knowledge of what I call base reality. Base reality, in this context, is what we all know to be true through the experience of our senses. We make hypotheses, question our theories, and decide whether or not something is true based on repetition, and replicability. All these things come together to form the basis of what we know about the world, and the objective nature of everything that surrounds us. We are continuously searching for more evidence about what reality consists of.

We cannot hold onto the hopes of distant scientific breakthroughs because we will not live to see them. We can only latch onto those theories, and proven facts which are based on our current knowledge. At the same time, it is important to strive after more knowledge because of the fact that we are insatiable creatures. Our thirst for understanding conceptual ideas, and ideals, are evident enough through our observations about ourselves and others.

Isolation can bring an individual to a very introspective outlook on life, and this is because it can teach us about getting in touch with our own ability to rationalize. When we think about the concept of analysis, we think of the scrutiny of intellectual abilities to the point where there is no room for error. The realm of the senses, which we are beholden to, keeps us focused on that which can be known as the truth. All truth is but a representation of the real thing, which can only be partially known through our discoveries via the senses.

My theory is that we will eventually know virtually all that can be known about ideas through the senses, and once we reach that limitation, we will seek further ways to augment our understanding of reality. Through advancements in technology, it may someday be possible to increase our abilities to hear, to see, and to feel objectively real concepts in an enhanced cognitive manner. These enhancements would be hardware, and software based, and allow users to perceive further descriptive elements of known reality.

The corpse of the human body encapsulates all that we know about life. It is still, without sentience or feeling, and is representative of a shell of what once was. It can be said that the human body is also a representation of the universe at large because we are also physical matter. What sets us apart from a rock (on a very crude level) is our ability to rationalize things cognitively as individuals. Our individuality is dependent on our biological makeup, as well as the environment around us. Taking these things into consideration, it must also be pointed out that we will eventually be as still as the rock is in our time of becoming deceased.

Abstractions are a feature of human consciousness, and this is shown through the way that we formulate ideas. After we formulate some ideas, we attempt to validate them as if it were possible to be experienced objectively. Other ideas fall to the wayside as mere daydreams invoked by an overactive imagination. Yet, it seems as if all the ideas we come up with have some basis in reality when dissected profoundly on an intellectual level. These ideas are not necessarily based on reality in the way that we might conventionally see it, but it is through the symbolism presented in these thoughts which reflect some modicum of truth.

The truth, if it is to be known, must be objective. It must also be processed by our brains in a way that is organized, and makes sense to us foundationally. Without this concept, we would never be able to grasp the complexities of life as we do now. What I mean by this is that our foundations are based on logic, and reason; both of which are necessary for cognition to be fruitful. We must use our faculties to research matters surrounding our cognitive faculties, and the underlying biological factors which are responsible for them.

By understanding biology better, we can then take this knowledge, and utilize it in a way that is beneficial to our research of the psychology of mind. There is so much for us to learn about how consciousness interacts with the brain that we can hardly run out of theories in the meantime regarding it. Consciousness physically manifests itself through neuronal impulses, and other activity in the brain.

We can gather data from research regarding how the brain functions, and why it does what it does on a physical level. These things are all known. What is unknown to us is where it fits into our worldview when we consider that we do not know everything there is to know about consciousness. If we did know everything about it, we would be able to easily refute other theories regarding the exact nature it takes in our physical world. Is consciousness physical somehow? Is there a way for us to be certain that we do not experience awareness after our demise? These are important questions to be asked.

The brain, being the center of where we learn, understand, and communicate with one another, allows us to formulate a composite reality. This composite reality is shared with the entirety of humanity via the senses, and this is something which is evident through reason. As we focus on emptying our understanding of the subjective through educating ourselves on the objective truths, we still find ourselves cast ashore alone. We attempt to grasp onto portions of reality which we do not have access to either because of evolutionary qualities, or through the realm of the senses. Cognitively, it seems as if we are just at the edge of some incredible discovery regarding the underlying concepts of conscious awareness, but we do not know what that might consist of.

Perhaps we are destined to never find out for ourselves if it is possible to augment the senses using technology in order to better understand reality. What we are left with consists of a limited consciousness that can only know so much about what this enormous universe truly represents. We can construct the world around us through a focus on scientific facts, as well as our own independent senses. This is something that we always do in order to make sense of the world.

When we strip theory down to its bare core, we can see that we are left with a representation of the world that is tremendously difficult to dissect without seeing things myopically. It is possible that our destination in this life is to not be able to see reality in any true form besides what our senses allow us to see. If this is the case, then we will always be in the dark regarding awareness, and the lengths that our natural abilities can go to report to us on our surroundings.

If we are left in the dark regarding the world around us, there is still some hope found in scientific inquiry. The information may not easily be present for us to experience firsthand, but someday others may build upon our discoveries. It is possible that our only legacy here on this planet is to continue on the path of knowledge that we *do* have in order to give future generations an understanding of the cosmos that we are merely touching upon ourselves.

We are at the beginning of a great journey into the truth of what reality consists of. Everything we have learned thus far has allowed us to continue on the path toward scientific, and philosophical inquiry. It is true, as I have mentioned, that we may never have all the answers, but it is possible that we can have a portion of the truth. The senses could be conduits between reality, and the filtered portions of our subjective minds which process the outside world. If this is so, then it is also possible that we might just only be able to evolutionarily understand reality by a narrow margin.

This narrow margin is what I call fundamental reality. Fundamental reality consists of the base knowledge that we have regarding the outside world, and how it functions. This expression of reality is based on the interaction between the senses, and the world as we know it. We are knowledgeable as to the conditions that exist in the outside world in relation to how functionality exists for us as human beings. This functionality is buffered by the senses, and could represent only a thin subsection of what might be a broader truth.

If we open our minds to the possibilities that there could very well be portions of reality not accessible to us, then it also follows that there could be additional rules, forces, and conditions that govern the world. We, of course, would be ignorant of those rules, forces, and conditions, and this is because of the narrow scope of what we can perceive in our physical bodies. The mind is a powerful tool whereby we can imagine the fetters of our shackles loosened so that we can push away boundaries set upon us by life. I say *imagine* because that is the extent of what we can do outside of a very limited ability to influence the outside world with our acts.

It is possible that we imagine complex mythologies in order to account for those blind spots that exist in human comprehension. What I mean by this is that our theologizing on hypotheticals keeps us able to rationalize on a primitive level the aspects of reality which are outside of our grasp. If we look at the mythological from a sociological perspective, we are then able to dissect the possibilities regarding conscious awareness.

Let us explore further the influences that mythology, religion, and other ancient systems of thought have upon the human mind. Mythology is universal in the sense that, while there may be differing stories, names, places, and events described by it, the outcome is virtually the same throughout the world. We are subjected to the stories that have manifested in times past which have a profound impact on who we are, even if we look at the world from a logical, rational point of view. Religious views, whilst they vary tremendously from culture to culture, explore a theme of a world that is under the influence of a much greater force (whatever that might be.)

Before the theories of Rudolf Virchow in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was often colloquially believed that ill humors were the primary cause of diseases. Now we understand cellular processes that function based on health, and disease through pathological studies. This understanding has led us to look at the world around us on a cellular level, and has advanced the theories, and discoveries which now are taken for granted as being true. Still, we must also realize that these advancements are natural for human beings to discover, and this is because throughout history we have slowly replaced our dependence on the fantastical with the scientifically evident.

The profundity of mythos cannot be understated even in the wake of our post-modern scientific age. We are at the cusp of something deeper than all of us when it comes to discovering new concepts, and possible realities. Perhaps we have created these fantastical myths to help us cope with those portions of reality that we do not have direct access to. Our subjective minds can drum up such creativity that our consciousness seems to be based on the very human attempt to surpass our knowledge of truth through mythos.

Even if we suppose that mythology holds no value, we would be mistaken because there are clues hidden within this aspect of human culture that can be deciphered through an objective lens. We have the ability to see through symbolism, and define for ourselves what it means to be truly cognizant of reality.

Symbolism provides an outlet for us to dissect, distinguish, and process the realities of the world around us in a distinct way. This distinction is based on the uniqueness of the human mind, and how it functions in everyday life. The brain is a complex, yet anatomically understood organ, in that it provides us with a way to navigate our way through this world. As we find ourselves learning more about the world in our daily lives, we become cognizant more and more of the fact that we are missing huge swaths of information. These swaths of information are connected with portions of reality that we simply have no access to.

It is natural to be fearful of the unknown, especially since that is a feature of human consciousness which is well documented. What lies beyond cognition is a world of richness, and complexity that can only be imagined. As we cannot determine what is beyond our senses without some form of theoretical augmentation, we must rely on what has been discovered about the physical world through science.

Science is continuously progressing in such a manner that we are indeed expanding what we know about the physical universe. Still, we are unable to experience the fullness of this knowledge because of our very real limitations biologically. If we could find some way to alter our consciousness, then we could possibly decipher more aspects of reality than we currently have access to. The question is, do we really want to know what lies beyond our current understanding? It may not be all that unwise to think about this question at length, especially since there may be vistas of reality that are possibly terrifying to behold.

I am bringing this subject up because there might be some evolutionary reason why we do not know more than we are capable of knowing about the universe. Our physical nature might be one in which we are imprisoned by our limitations, or kept from knowing about all of reality due to the possibility that we might collapse mentally if we were to know more. This is a distinct possibility, but it may be one in which we just find ourselves in as a result of chance, or perhaps the right conditions for this sort of evolution to proceed.

# Chapter Five



## Social Connections, and Objectivity

The way that we move throughout society in our casual daily existence is determined by one's own station in life. Social upbringing, current environmental factors, as well as cognitive abilities all come together to influence the individual in their overall personality. Actions are brought out into the world through thoughts, ideas, and passing fancies which may or may not be ethically sound. There are several dimensions of reality that we face here, and this is evidenced by each of our senses working together. Information is relayed to the brain via the senses, and it is there where we are able to make sense of the world.

It is as if we are in a gigantic puzzle with various pieces strewn about here, and there. As human beings, we search for those pieces, and place them where we can fit them in the great tapestry of known reality. Objective reality is always there, and will continue to exert its power over us throughout the entirety of one's lifespan. How we process this objective information is highly individualistic in nature, and this is where our ability to function on a social level is important. To clarify, I mean that how we interact with others directly influences our behavior in ways that are not always immediately known.

When we observe others, and their behaviors, we take social cues which are then processed by the brain in a way that makes sense to us. By looking at how others respond to situations, we can then formulate actions in our minds in a more concrete way. We conceptualize information, as well as educate ourselves as to how we should respond to outside stimuli. All this is done within the quietude of the mind, and just like subjectivity, it is a manifestation of individuality within conscious awareness.

This individuality is potent in that it is the source of foundational knowledge of the construct of the self that is perceiving this reality. The self is merely us codified into a conventional packaging whereby we can explore the outside world in a personalized manner. Whether we decide to break it down to this level is up to us, but in my view, it is a necessity as the deconstruction of the self is pivotal in the evolution of understanding. The more that we know about ourselves, and what is possibly unreal about us, the more we are able to penetrate into the heart of ignorance to gather what little knowledge we can.

It is in those spaces of abstract thought that we find ourselves situated entirely of our own accord. To clarify, we are peculiar creatures in that we seek to know reality, yet at the same time we design for ourselves with our imaginations constructs which are hardly real. If we are to dissect the truth, we must be then willing to cast aside those things which are not authentically *us*. This is no easy task, of course, and must be prefaced with the admission that our individuality hinges upon these constructs in many ways.

Yet, when we look at the bigger picture, it becomes easier to see just how insignificant our roles truly are in the world. We often think that what we know about the cosmos is sufficient for our understanding. When we peel back the layers of socialization, and personal history, the individual then becomes cognizant of the fact that we know relatively very little about the universe around us. Our senses keep us imprisoned in our small world of personality, and prevent us from reaching out beyond the insignificance of our weak disposition toward life. Perhaps this is another example of the tragedy of existence, particularly human existence.

We must be willing to lay down our current life for one in which there is a degree of authenticity if we are to embolden ourselves to peer objectively into the outside world. There is no self, nor is there a human-centric aspect of existence that can keep us from realizing this. We only have a blank slate whereby we must continue to toil, and work hard at looking at the possibilities before us.

The unity of reality is only apparent through our recognition of what might be, and this is wholly based on our senses. Physicality, the subjective, the objective, and the mental are all dimensions of our constructed reality. We are connected with one another because of this, and it is clear that we view the world around us similarly to one another. Because of this, we can agree upon such findings in science such as mass, weight, volume, and so on. What we cannot seem to agree upon are the subtleties that lie within reality which we are unable to fully comprehend.

Cognition brings us to a level of understanding that is wholly based upon how we process information in our brains. This understanding is necessarily connected with the limitations of our perception of the world around us. We can only assume that there are vistas of reality that are undiscovered beyond the realm of sensorial experience. If this is the case, then it is possible (as I have said) that it is a good thing that we do not venture too far beyond what we can currently know. What I mean by this is that the truth of reality might be far too *busy* for us to truly comprehend.

In the unexplored portions of reality there may be so many discoveries, nuances, and physical properties that we might not be able to dissect properly all of this new information. Our biology could be saving us from utter insanity through the limitations that are naturally placed upon us through the senses. There could be a form of reality surrounding us that is invisible, and unknowable to us due to our limitations. We could be seeing only a reflection, as it were, of the entirety of the spheres that comprise reality.

There is something disjointed about human experiences, and this is shown through the various ways we try to make sense of the world but cannot. There are man-made sociological constructs that are placed in our direct line of view at all times. These sociological constructs keep us psychologically aware of our own personal need to have structure, and organization as the basis of our interactions with the world. It is within this artificially devised structure that we live, and breathe. It would seem that our relationship to reality is tenuous at best, and hopelessly flawed at worst.

Regardless of how flawed our relationship to reality is, there is a degree of sense that can be made of the world through our natural faculties. It is through these natural faculties that we learn about the world around us, and our place in the cosmos on at least a rudimentary level. Though we cannot seem to be able to rely on our senses alone to tell us the full story of reality, we can at least function on a vital level. This level of being allows us to push forward, and continue on the path of knowledge. There will always be some form of blind spot in our path to understanding reality. We must simply accept this, and move on.

The more we try to understand the world around us, the more there are theories regarding the complexities behind cognition that are brought up. These theories range from the fantastical to the rational, and everything in between. Psychology allows us to peer into the inner workings of the mind to a degree, and is based on scientific discovery, and knowledge regarding the brain. This allows us to look at functionality, patterns of thought processes, and to dissect the subtleties of conscious awareness to a point.

Still, we cannot at this point in time decipher reality to the degree that is beyond our known senses. We are stuck in a peculiar mathematical, and physical framework that, while allowing us to learn more about the world around us, keeps us from venturing too far beyond the scope of what we have already learned about the cosmos. We may have advancements over time, that is without a question, however, these advancements are purely based on our senses. This is the case, of course, with how we currently are able to perceive the world around us. Someday, as I have mentioned, we may be able to augment the senses in a manner that allows perception to increase exponentially.

None of us can travel far beyond the scope of what we already have knowledge of, save for that body of information which we have inherited through the sciences. It is through the physical sciences that we are able to ascertain the visible, knowable cosmos. All knowledge begins with a basic understanding of the human body, and the workings of the mind.

There are patterns to how we develop as human beings throughout our natural lifespans. These patterns are sociological, psychological, and internalized in such a way that they are at once unique to the individual, as well as universal in appearance. One pattern is to develop mental constructs that help to assuage the difficulties of living in this world. We create personas which we show to the outside world, and private ones which we keep to ourselves. It is as if we are in a large play, and we represent the various characters in some once unknown story. These characters that represent us are mental patterns which develop over time as a defense mechanism against the chaotic nature of the outside world.

Defense mechanisms keep us focused on maintaining a guard around us on a psychological level. This guard that we possess is artificial, and wholly subject to the history of the individual. Such things keep us relatively safe, in our minds, against attacks upon our character, person, and perception of the self. The self, as is known to the individual, encapsulates the entirety of the body of knowledge we have gained throughout our lives thus far. It is through the self that we can obtain a basic foundation for living that keeps us relatively unharmed from the barrage of information assailing us at all times.

Information, interaction, and influences from the outside world creep into our psyche on a level which is sublimated into the subjective mind. These three aspects of the causal form a unique bond which is inherently a part of the fabric of reality. Information keeps us aware of our surroundings, and tells us what we should know regarding the nature of the outside world. Interaction with others, and with objects in the causal universe tethers us to the objective via an ecumenical experience of focused exchange between individuals. Finally, we have influences from the outside world. It is here that the knowledge of the truth is found, and discovered by the individual to a degree which allows for there to be a balance between the mind, and the objective. All these aspects are regarded as being necessary for the individual to progress intellectually, as well as interpersonally with others.

In *The Significance of Psychoanalysis for the Mental Sciences*, authors Otto Rank, and Hanns Sachs claim that “As psychoanalysis learns to consider the ideational life, in general, as interplay of the instinctive life so the individual mental mechanisms of distortion and compromise formation correspond to the different possibilities of the fate of instinct; among these possible results, we recognize besides the repression, still others, especially transformation of instincts (such as the inversion into the opposite.)” It is at this point that we learn that through the primitivism of instinct the individual is able to either experience a transformation, or to repress one’s own nature. In psychology, it is clear that what we represent as individuals begins with the primitive state of instinctual relationships, and how we choose to either reinvent ourselves, or remain stagnant.

All these influences, which range from the constructs of personality to the instinctual, come together to provide, and inform us as to how we should live. Certainly, we are influenced by the artifices of cultural phenomena such as religious, or dogmatic beliefs, but these are becoming increasingly untenable for many as we evolve into post-modernity. We are coming to realize that the source of our ability to function comes from a much more mysterious place than that of mythology alone. It is almost impossible to grasp the subtleties of mythology, but these ancient concepts haunt us even as we focus on the logical, and rational.

Our intention to gain knowledge of the world around us is neither precise, nor perfect, as it must be understood through the basic tools that we have intellectually. Cognitive experiences function on a level of basic biology, but at the same time we must recognize the abstract in consciousness. It is through the abstract that individuals are able to make sense of the world, and to navigate those spaces of uncertainty which plague us from the time we are born. Of course, we must understand the objective, of this there is no doubt. Yet, we are still in a position whereby we must also rely on our subjective method of processing objectivity as we habitually do. Our subjective method is unique to every individual, but is no doubt universal in its application.

This universality of application is based on the fact that we process information subjectively, and with our individual selves in mind. Each person has a unique vision of the world on a social level that fits into a narrative that has been created by the individual themselves. As a narrative, the subjective takes the objectivity available in the outside world, and imbues it with a sense of individuality that is unique to each, and every one of us. The sense of individuality that I am speaking of relates to how the individual creates constructs out of the available information that they come across. Outside input through the objective world forces us to manifest a way of thinking that is wholly based on a subjective worldview.

Of course, we could also look at the reality that we are facing, and deny that we view things subjectively, but that would be a case of self-deception. We often deceive ourselves, in that we think that we are objectively experiencing the world, when in fact we are experiencing a composite truth. This composite truth is based on the conceptualization that human beings can only sense, and know, a certain portion of reality. This reality is therefore a composite as well, and consists of various machinations of the mind that interpret the outside world, however poorly.

By this, I mean that objective mathematical truths, as well as physics-based truths, are experienced in a way that is peculiar to our sensorial experience. Our focus on that which can be replicated, known through others, and experienced individually, helps to maintain our grip on the causal world. As far as we know, these laws, or truths, are dimensionally available to us on a fundamental level, but we do not know whether or not there are additional dimensions to our discovery of physics, and calculation.

Human beings are easily deceived, especially when it comes to an understanding of what is, and is not fundamental to consciousness. We have our theories, and each one of them provides some clue as to the fullness of the truth regarding objectivity. It would be a stretch to say that we know everything there is to know about the objective causal world. Still, we press on, and continue to search for answers to our critical questions.

Our questions regarding life are based on causality, being, and essence. Causality is in reference to the objective physical nature of the world. Being represents the individual, and the various aspects of personality. Essence here represents what it means to be fundamentally human. Humanity is, as I have mentioned many times before, at a crossroads of experience, and this is due to the world rapidly changing in our post-modern society. The post-modern is all around us, and grasps onto our totality of being through the essence of despair. It is through despair that we learn of the grave situation we find ourselves in as a species.

Despair represents a powerful aspect of the human mind, and is one in which there is rarely a cure present, and available. It is a fundamental human emotion that comprises of all those aspects of existence which torture us. The more we seek out knowledge, the deeper we become involved in the understanding of our own deaths. This is objective knowledge at work. In the recesses of the mind there lies a profound understanding of mortality, and this is even more pronounced for those who have studied anatomical structures.

The causal is that which confronts us on a daily basis, and is objectively real in the sense that others can confirm it. Of course, what we all agree upon to be real could simply be a mere fraction of the reality that is not available to us. It is also possible that everything that we know is either a simulation, or an elaborate matrix of reality that we can hardly begin to comprehend. These possibilities are neither falsified nor are they codified as being true either.

The fact that we are faced with multiple possibilities is one of the greatest tragedies that we will ever know. It seems at times that we will never know, no matter how hard we might try to be aware, regarding an expanded comprehension of the universe that is inclusive of all aspects of reality. Our ability to function on a level that is grounded in reason, and logic, allows us to question our reality in a cohesive manner. By this, I mean that each of us has theories, ideas, and conceptualizations.

To conceive of reality is to be open to changing perspectives regarding the truth, and what we can know. This sort of concept requires individuals to be open psychologically to the possibility that what we know to be true is at least partially false. It is humbling to think of the myriad of ways we as a species have been wrong about the cosmology of the world, and the universe at large. Throughout written history, human beings have attempted to bridge the gap between the knowable, and that which is unknown. Of course, it is an impossible task, but we continuously seek answers to our burning questions regardless of the outcome.

Society is still developing in the sense that we are only beginning to touch the surface regarding a more profound sort of education that is starting to be implemented. This education is in the sciences, as well as in technology. Knowledge of both of these disciplines can serve as a gateway whereby the individual can perceive deeper truths concerning reality as a whole. The individual is at the center of this education. Such aspects of learning are quickly becoming more available as globalization continues to take effect.

It is through globalization that we can universally have access to information. Much of this is thanks to technological advancements which allow us to have instantaneous access to data regardless of location. The social aspect of the human experience is developing rapidly toward the implementation of artificial intelligence, and a reliance on technology. This will no doubt continue to be a major influence on our understanding of the world as individuals, and as entire cultures. The truth of the matter is, we will continue to develop technologically along a trajectory that may lead to augmentation of biological matter.

If there is a development in technology that allows for augmentation, then we may find ourselves looking at the possibility of understanding more of reality than we currently have access to. These possible developments could have massive implications for the future of the human species. Objective reality may then be seen as being more encompassing of aspects that we had not originally observed.

Scrutiny keeps us on the cusp of new knowledge regarding the natural sciences. We have a tremendous body of knowledge specifically dealing with the brain, and the various functions it has from an anatomical, and measured viewpoint. This body of knowledge is based on precedent, past discoveries, and observations. With this knowledge we still do not have an adequate explanation for consciousness. Perhaps we will see whether or not our adoption of technology will extend to enhancing the senses we have access to.

The world maintains an order in which we are active participants in the scope of what constitutes as being real. The truth, if we are to break it down, is that we envision a foundation of reality where everything makes sense. The problem with this view is that we cannot currently make sense of the universe in such a way that we will have a complete cosmological foundation of everything that exists. We may never have such a foundation available to us because of the fact that we are limited in our perception of fundamental reality.

An invisible world exists alongside us at every moment of the day, though we cannot perceive it. Objectively, we can experience what others report as the truth, but we cannot know beyond what the senses allow us to experience. This is, of course, if we follow the natural path of human biological fact. If we entertain the possibilities that we might be able to change our natural capacities into something which is unnaturally augmented, then there may be a way to know things beyond the current scope of our abilities. At this point in time we do not know what that would look like, nor can we envision it beyond the scope of our imaginations.

The imagination is a powerful force in the human repertoire of abilities. We are able to cognitively envision the possibilities which exist outside of causal reality on a level which is beyond simple limitation. What I mean here is that it is in our minds where we possess a sort of power that is beyond objectivity. It is of a subjective nature that is fueled by symbolism, and the unconscious.

# Chapter Six



## The Classifications of States of Consciousness

“It is perhaps well to reemphasize that there are no absolute lines of demarcation between any of the functional psychoses. Abnormal variations of behavior which are due to affective distortion are to be regarded as varieties of biological abortion. The predominant affective variations and symptomatic traits that characterize the different types are due to the *conditional needs of the autonomic cravings and egoistic, affective resistances to these needs.*” – Edward J. Kempf, *Psychopathology*.

Human beings are caught between the pathologies of abnormal thinking, and the rational focus on conscious awareness. It is through our awareness that we are thereby privy to realize what constitutes rationality, versus the pathological. By looking at the world in a way that forces us to realize the potentiality we have for the abnormal, we can come to an understanding of our consciousness on a sober level. This sobriety is a form of meditation because it forces us to look introspectively regarding human cognition.

Edward J. Kempf, in his work *Psychopathology*, clearly lines out the difference between the well-adjusted, and the abnormal. It is here that individuals are classified not so much by factors that have to deal with the outside world, as they are by their inner-cognitive abilities. In the states of consciousness where mental illness arises, there are often several reasons why this might occur. We must explore honestly regarding the various states of consciousness, including those which are painful to conceive of. The reason behind this is that it is through the recognition of abnormality that we are able to perceive a grain of truth regarding reality itself. The abnormal exists because of environmental, social, and individual causes.

Each state of consciousness is based on some form of objective understanding of the world, even if that state functions on an abstract level. What I mean by this is that no matter how well we cognitively function, we have to consider that in any given state we have an opportunity to experience reality through an individualistic lens. This experience of reality is highly influenced by the subjective, symbolic, and personal aspects of consciousness.

It is through human experiences that we learn how to dissect the world around us proportionate to our state of mind. Our state of mind allows us to function on a wavelength whereby we can decipher the outside world in some concrete way. One way of deciphering the world is found through a form of rational, and logical thinking. It is here where we must discover, and educate ourselves regarding the causal objective reality before us.

Consciousness is enigmatic in that, while we do not fully understand it, the expression of it is fluid, and malleable in a way that allows us to understand the world better as it appears to us. We may never fully uncover the mysteries behind consciousness in our lifetimes, but we can still theorize regarding it. As we approach the topic of cognitive awareness, it is important to consider that each individual is able to perceive the world to the best of their abilities. There are so many factors that contribute to the expression of conscious awareness, and these involve sociological phenomena that is rich in tradition.

This tradition involves thinking abstractly, as well as rationally when looking at the world. As we turn inward on ourselves, we become increasingly introspective regarding our own natures, and those of others. The pathology of the mind is so complex that it is still being studied to this day. One way of looking at things is to conclude that all of us have some pathological experience in our minds at one point or another. If we take this view into consideration, we then are able to realize that it is in illness that we learn of the value of the objective truth. When we are stripped naked, metaphorically, we see things so much clearer than before.

The world around us is complex, dichotomous, and full of uncertainty on an emotional, and intellectual level. The complexity of the world is found in the different strata of realities that come together to form a composite understanding of the truth. In our struggle to understand our place in the world, we are continuously challenged to make sense of our surroundings. The world is dichotomous in the sense that there are opposing factors which comprise the rich inner life of the individual in contrast to the purely objective. We exist in this life of uncertainty in such a way that we do not realize, or are often ignorant of, the need to realize our fragility.

Each of these factors come together to synthesize our world before us. We are simultaneously complex, yet primitive in many ways. Our understanding of the outside world is colored primarily by those features of consciousness which exist for us. We are carnal creatures, and live in a world of senses allowing us to envision with mathematical certainty the foundational basis for reality. Physics exists, and is independent of our willingness to recognize it. Mathematics allows us to become cognizant of the aspects of reality which are dimensionally available to us as human beings.

States of consciousness vary from person to person, but there are fundamental similarities which allow for a dispensation of the truth. The truth here is that we are at the mercy of a physical universe that acts upon us, and our biology, in such a way that we cannot ignore it. Our inner world is colored by the subjective, but we are at the same time engulfed by objective reality on a fundamental level. It is here that the individual can come to realize that everything is a composite of dichotomous forces.

Just as night follows the day, the subjective follows the objective. All things are dichotomous in some fashion, or another. Composite reality is simply our window to reality (even if that window is narrow in the metaphorical sense.) All that we know is what our senses report to us, and this goes for all known natural laws that can be observed with scrutiny. The individual can only know a theoretically narrow margin of what reality is.

The status of the conscious mind changes over time, and even throughout the daily experience of life. It is hard to pinpoint these changes because they are developed subtly within the brain of the individual in question. We can measure brain waves, and determine that something is going on inside of us on a scientific level, and this is all well and good. Yet, we face a great mystery when it comes to consciousness in general. The conscious mind is malleable in the sense that it can adapt to environmental stimuli, as well as internal processing of subjective experiences.

These subjective experiences interact with the objective in the sense that there is an interplay between the two on a fundamental level. This interplay brings the aspects of what everyone else experiences versus what the individual recognizes through cognitive awareness. It is through the subjective processing of information that we realize just how varied the forms of consciousness truly are. Each one of us is truly unique in the sense that no two inner worlds are quite the same. Certainly, we experience objective realities in the same manner as one another, yet there is something else going on in the brain at the same time which is wholly unique.

What that something else is exactly is hard to pinpoint. My theory is that reality is processed almost as if we were looking into a mirror that has been shattered. We see certain shards of the mirror reflecting back onto us our image, yet in each shard there is a different angle that is seen. Similarly, there are varying sizes of these broken shards which, when separated, appear chaotic rather than organized. Our reality, in this theory, is completely shattered, separated by various aspects, and pieced together (as best as possible) through rational thought.

Our senses, and capacity to reflect on the world, are combined in our cognitive abilities. It is through the cognition of the brain that we are able to piece together those shards of this metaphorical mirror, and build a picture of reality which is a composite of each aspect. This picture may never be complete, but it appears to us to be so despite our limitations. To clarify, we only have partial access to reality, even if it seems otherwise.

To classify states of consciousness we must scrutinize ourselves on a level that is introspective, and rational. We must pierce through the veil of self-deception, and be completely honest with ourselves as individuals. Doing this is no easy task, but it is one in which there is a high degree of introspection involved. Each one of us has the capability to decipher the states of mind involved in understanding objective reality versus the subjective.

The unconscious mind is powerful in that there is an induction of variables such as external environmental factors, internal states of emotional expression, and the symbolic all at once. The symbolic allows us to fill in the gaps between what we can understand, and what we do not currently know to be the truth. Emotional expression, being a manifestation of internalized states, provides an outlet whereby the individual can make sense of the outside world.

External environmental aspects include the experiences we all go through, inclusive of loss, suffering (either mental, or physical), and even moments of pleasure. These are factors that are profoundly influential in our lives because of the depth of experience required to understand what it means to quantify grief with the reality of fleeting pleasures. Grief is a factor which involves every ounce of strength from the individual to pass through. It is remembered in a manner that is personal to the individual, and at the same time it is a concrete reality for each one of us in some way.

Sorrow, pain, anguish, and uncertainty plague us nearly all the days of our lives in some way (however minute) because it is ever present to a varying degree. Yes, there are times when we experience pleasure, or at the very least boredom induced through the lack of active suffering. It is certain, however, that we experience difficult emotions more often than not. Whilst we live, we must push forward in order to survive each passing day. This much is known. We do not know many factors regarding the extension of reality that are beyond our scope of reasoning, and cognitive understanding. Still, we must carry on, and think of ways to reconcile the suffering, and pain we go through versus the absence of these things.

The absence of pain does not make it any less difficult to experience it when it does come to us by virtue of situational forces. It is through pain that we can gauge our lives in such a way as to measure abstractly this aspect of *being* contrasted with our existence as a whole. Suffering keeps us aware of the objective world in such a way that it reminds us continuously of its presence in our lives. Whether this suffering consists of the physical, or mental, it is always present in some way for us.

It is through suffering that we are able to penetrate into the heart of humanity. In our greatest time of need we often are able to peer deeply into our minds, and become witness to the phenomena of despair. This phenomenon is uncontrollable, and can only be allayed for a time during one's own life. It always comes back to haunt everyone. Despair, being the source of even greater maladies such as the will towards self-annihilation, is an aspect of human emotion that is the result of a consciousness that is perhaps too advanced.

This advanced consciousness is what we are currently facing, and will always face as a species. We have always been enthralled by the questions that life brings, regardless of how reckless the outcome of the knowledge of our inquiries might be. By this, I mean that there will come a time in which we will be face to face with the ability to learn something about time, space, or physics in general which is beyond our current understanding. Once we learn about whatever discoveries are made, it is possible that we are then culpable of the resulting knowledge which may drive us mad.

Let us consider for a moment that the knowledge of what lies beyond our current sensual abilities is perhaps too terrifying to behold. I do not mean mathematical equations causing panic in the streets. What I am referring to is the possibility that we might augment our senses in such a way as to understand new aspects of hitherto unknown vistas of reality. This knowledge might cause us to become more aware of the world as it really is, and therefore we could lose our faculties of reasoning if we venture too far. This theory is, of course, remote in the sense that we currently do not have access to such augmentation at the moment.

Nonetheless, it is a very real proposition that we could, at some point in our evolution, go mad from our discoveries about the nature of reality. We are already cognizant of death, and how it occurs on a scientific level. In addition, we are aware of the fragility of life as it exists for us on a daily basis, even if we do not actively acknowledge it. These factors combine to display a certain pathology of thinking which has developed throughout our history as a species. This pathology is that of the aforementioned aspect of despair which is so peculiar to us as human beings.

Despair, being a mental concept, is one which we all must experience at one point or another in time. It is through the mental experience of being human that we must succumb to its grasp one day, much like death. When we experience despair, we plumb the very depths of our being, and emerge into the true core of what it means to be human. This core is fundamental to all that live in that we must admit a certain defeat regarding the course of life as it is. Whether this comes to us through intellectual idealism, or through instinctual means, we must all face despair as a very real element of our existence.

When we suffer, we often cannot think of anything else other than the pain that we are directly facing. This causes us to be single-minded in the sense that nothing else is adequate to distract one from experiencing that pain. Suffering is suitable enough for us to lose control of our faculties, and can be the cause of a great deal of internal anguish for the individual. All forms of suffering are detrimental to the individual in one way or another.

Death gives us a unique perspective on life because it is a constant reality for us to have to face. We may be in good health, have general positive experiences, and so on, but these things are ephemeral in nature. What I mean by this is that they pass all too quickly, and the pain or anguish returns just as swiftly to the individual in question. Paradoxically, we tend to ignore this fact, and continue on with our lives as if these issues are not possible to experience. Despite our best efforts, we cannot escape the ravages of time, and experience.

It is through experience that we learn of the various masks we place in front of our faces when dealing with others on a social level. The focus that can be seen here is that we take on various personas throughout our lives, and rarely do we take a look at the authenticity of them. When we do, we become introspective, and are able to see through the façade of the way we present ourselves. This façade is one which we all shall succumb to in our daily lives either out of necessity, or mere habit. Either way, we are continuously showing various masks to others that are constructed from multiple sources.

These sources are psychological, sociological, and ideological in nature. The psychological here is represented through the connection that is made between the subjective experience of the individual, and the objective world. In turn, the sociological characteristic is focused here on the way that we interact with others out of habit. Finally, the ideological aspect reveals the construct of the self that is fashioned out of necessity through the development of the mind itself.

Our minds are constructed in such a way that we ourselves represent in essence a conglomeration of influences. These influences are social, biological, and at times, primitive in nature. We must therefore look deeply into our unconscious mind, and perceive those aspects of the primitive through introspection. Again, meditation on one's own nature is one way to look at the situation, and rationalize it. This is a normal thing to try to do because it is based on logic, and reason. It is only natural to want to dissect the truth in such a manner that we can make some sense of it.

There are several ways in which we can stimulate the mind to focus on the primitive desires inherent within. One way is through meditation. Another is through being honest with oneself, and realizing that there are aspects of our being which are carnal, and base in nature. These things are all found through introspection, and through the realization that we are complex beings with intricate truths that must be unveiled one by one. The truth here is represented by the nakedness of humankind in front of the reality of nature.

Nothing we can do can change the outcome of our existence which is death. All we can do is try to perceive the truth of this reality whilst we live, and perhaps leave an intellectual legacy to the people who come after us. In the depths of our very being we are in search of a truth which may never unfold before our eyes. This truth represents a cosmological view that is expanded through the distinguishing of fact from fiction. The more knowledge of the cosmos that we gain, the more we are able to look accurately at ourselves on biological, and psychological levels.

In death, we are the same as each other. Our bodies decay, and eventually skeletonize, and there is nothing we can do to prevent this from happening. It is through the process of decay that there is an understanding regarding biological aspects of the physical body. This knowledge can help assist the individual to the extent that there is an intimacy of understanding that develops through time. This intimacy is based on a fundamental knowledge of the human body, as well as those mental processes which are channeled through us daily.

When we are introspective, and focus on the subjective, we are able to communicate more effectively with ourselves, and others. By allowing oneself to look inward, and really think hard about those subjects relating to inner experience, there is a possibility that there can be a personal revelation of being. This revelation of being is highly individualistic, and based on a profound introspection that must precede it.

Otto Rank, and Hanns Sachs, in their work *The Significance of Psychoanalysis for the Mental Sciences*, proclaim that “The needs, on the one hand, of bringing the processes of nature nearer by incarnating them, and on the other hand, of solving the human emotional conflicts by projecting them out into nature, unite in the tendency to myth formation.” We are connected to the primitive need for mythology in order to explain the unexplainable regarding the conscious mind. It is through mythos that we are capable of recognizing powerful imaginative traits within us that influence our personas on a fundamental level. The subjective mind is focused on that which is able to be processed individualistically.

When despair takes hold of us, and we are in the middle of some psychological crisis of sorts, it is well, and good that we had better be prepared already for what we will experience. If we are not prepared to go through the experience of despair, it will hit us like a ton of bricks out of nowhere. This is not to say that it will be any easier for the individual that is prepared to experience despair. It is just that the person that thinks on these subjects is more likely to survive the effects which despair has on us in general.

Pain is pain regardless of how it is experienced. The same goes for anguish, and suffering of all kinds. Mental anguish can be so excruciatingly painful that it is debilitating on a fundamental level. Physical suffering can bring about worse conditions within the body, especially if it is a long-suffering form of illness or pathological disease. Regardless of how we suffer, there are still the effects of the pain that we go through whether it be physical or mental in nature.

As a species we have created myths in order to better explain the depths of consciousness, but we always end up empty handed in the end. Our primitive nature still exists, and is always there even when we are at our most rational. When we dream, we experience this primitive nature for ourselves in a way that does not always coincide with objective reality. When we go about our daily lives as normal, we also experience the primitive nature of our needs for fulfillment, and basic survival.

Let us return to the concept that the abnormal entrenches itself in our daily lives. It is through the conscious recognition that pathologies exist that the individual is able to break through, as it were, and become aware of the subtleties that manifest in the mind. Our conglomeration of influences which makes up our personality is always present regardless of how far in the background it may be for us mentally. When we stop to consider the possibility that conscious awareness of pathologies can help assist the individual in seeing things from a more rational perspective, we can also imagine that attempting to do so represents a desire for survival. This desire for survival becomes apparent in all of us as we live our lives.

# Chapter Seven



## How the Seemingly Abnormal Affects the Casual World

The world around us is stunningly chaotic, yet ordered in such a way as to create the illusion of steadfastness when all there remains is for there to be continual change. We change throughout our lives on a biological level, and this is apparent through the aging process. It is through the recognition of the world that we realize soon enough that everything that lives is subject to this change. No one can escape it, and it is simply something that must be recognized, and understood for what it is.

Our patchwork frame of understanding the objective world is one in which we are able to function on a relatively stable level. This understanding is inclusive of the subjective, as well as the processed information that comes to us through the senses. We are a composite of objective influences which are presented to us, and imprinted on us to a level which is foundational to who we basically are.

The abnormal stands before us as representative of the power that the mind has over our conscious awareness. We may think that we are able to control our minds to a great extent, but the more we think about it, the more possible it becomes that we are simply at the mercy of consciousness. As it stands, we are aware of many things that affect us on a daily basis. These things are inclusive of the concepts that we shall die one day, that we shall become ill, and suffer from some sort of disease most likely.

We have a basis for understanding rationality, and the logical, and this is found in the rich history of education, and literacy that allows for critical thinking. This basis for how we learn about the world around us is found in the rich traditions of personal, educational, and an objective grounding in what *can* be known about reality.

But reality, as a term, is not just a misnomer for the definition of a complete vision of the world around us. What it is composed of, in the context of our bodies, is simply something that we experience as a matter of fact through our senses. We do not know the scope of reality beyond the senses, and though it might be possible to augment them, even then we will have missed important vistas of truth obscured by the dullness of our knowledge of things. In other words, the more we learn about reality, the more we must concede that we know very little concerning the truth of the matter.

We live in a world that is constructed in such a way that pieces of life fall into place when we look at it through the lens of human consciousness. Things make sense. Geometry is sound, and so is essential mathematics. All is well in the world, or so it would seem. Yet, there is a burning desire within each one of us to magnify, and express his or her will to the outside world. There is a rich inner space of existence that is simply beyond the objective alone. It is one in which human consciousness resides in some mysterious fashion.

This mystery is one that fills our imagination with possibilities, ideals, thoughts, and passing fancies. For it must be said that though we function on a level which is both objective, and subjective, we represent a composite of both that cannot be denied. It is within the depths of human consciousness that we are able to find clues which will help us attend to life's pressing matters concerning the will, and existence.

The way we think about life reflects directly on how we might choose to act in this world. Our actions, even minor ones, are the result of being conscious, and aware. We can choose to create, or we can become destructive. Both choices are the consequences of human cognition, and we have to be solemnly aware of this truth. The will, being itself far from free, and possibly even illusory, is manifested through desires which are borne by the individual at the very core of their being. We all have desires that must be attended to, or at the very least, thought of in more than a passing way. These desires form the basis of all advancements in this life.

Life cannot be seen without looking at, and closely examining the senses themselves. We see the world around us, and can determine at least to a reasonable degree what is true, and what is false. We are able to navigate this world by means of instinct, information, and by way of our education (either formal or informal). Internally, however, we must make an informed decision as to whether we will choose to ruminate on those things which have plagued us since birth, or not.

The reality of the matter is that we are complex beings that require impetus from without, as well as within. In our subjective view of the world we are able to create a composite image of what is real versus the patently false. It is an imperfect way of handling things, but it is one in which we are molded consistently by.

The strength of the will, through the manifestation of desire, keeps us afloat in this world where freedom is costly, and position in life is decided largely by situational factors. It is through the will that we are able to determine what is important to us on a fundamental level. We can accomplish great things with the power of the will itself, though this also depends on situational factors, and the environment in which one is surrounded.

None of us can pass through this life without thinking at least to a small degree about the fleeting nature of our bodies. When we do think about this topic, we are immediately humbled in a way that pierces through our pride, ego, and anything else that artificially stands in front of us blocking us from the truth. The scales fall from our eyes at some point, and we are able to see anew. Still, even though this is something that occurs naturally in the course of an individual's life, this does not mean that the person in question will take seriously the revelations that have been granted to them. To clarify, though we may experience revelations of internal self-knowledge, this does not mean that we will become wise because of it. Human beings are broken on a fundamental level, and this becomes all the more apparent when observing these things which occur to all of us at some point in time.

Purpose can be found through the study of the abnormalities which plague us psychologically. We can choose to educate ourselves regarding the pathologies that we may encounter in ourselves, and those around us. This choice is one in which there is a focus on the power of the will to extend desire beyond the subjective experience of the mind into the actual world through action. It is through intellectualizing the morbid that we can find ourselves in a better position to gauge where we are mentally. This seems difficult to do, of course, but like anything that is done as a novice it is always difficult in the beginning.

The abnormal reaches us through the everyday interactions we have with others. It affects us even if we do not suffer from said pathologies. The outside world, with the actions that people might enact, provides us with an experience in which we need to be aware of the psychological, as well as rational. Without a decent education, at least informally on one's own, it is difficult to think that an individual can function in a balanced way in this world. Education comes to us by means of both formal, as well as informal aspects. These aspects help to formulate a means by which we as individuals can grow, and learn about the world around us.

Sociologically, we find ourselves in a position where we are meant to be part of a technologically advanced, globalized world, and at the same time conform to those standards handed down to us by virtue of being born. Where we are born, the conditions in which we live, and our access to the basic necessities of life all come together to influence just how far we will allow ourselves to go when it comes to focusing on the intellectual. Since this is situational, no one individual person can be faulted for not having learned certain traits, skills, or characteristics that are helpful to one's own life.

We are at the mercy of situational forces which gather around us, and influence us in profound ways that must be accounted for. Not everyone can afford to think about eternal things, and this is especially so if one's own basic needs are not being met. Psychologically, the individual that is experiencing a deficit in any life area can find themselves suffering.

There is no talent so great, no aspiration so high, that the individual cannot but pause and think about the possibilities that exist in this world. These possibilities concern the vocational aspect of life, one's own abilities or natural talents, and the ability to transcend one's own lot in this world to a degree. There is a limit, of course, to what we can accomplish based on our own natures, but this is simply a matter of fact that must be contended with individually. Once we accept our limitations, as well as our strengths, we are then possibly able to utilize tools which are at our disposal to modify, or improve our station in life.

We can do all these things, and accept those things which we cannot change. To do so is the most human sort of thing possible. We currently cannot transcend past the limitations of our senses, and it is because of this that we must be humble. Perhaps there will come a day when we will be able to say that we have done something revolutionary through technological augmentation. Until that day, we must remain where we are on more than one level.

In order to grow as a person it should be said that there must be a recall of those things that are exemplary of our weakness as a species. Psychologically, we must be prepared to delve deeply into our own minds, and come to the realization that we are lowly creatures. Yes, we have consciousness, and a sense of self-awareness, but is this enough to take us anywhere existentially? Arthur Schopenhauer once remarked that animals do not have the same sense of mortality that we do, and made the distinction between their consciousness and ours in the natural order of things.

The will is such that our desires are enmeshed with that which we would deign to do in the causal world. Our actions show a very outward manifestation of an inner process which begins at the level of the subjective mind. It is through subjectivity that we find ourselves begging the question as to whether we will ever understand the meaning of things as they exist. This situation has been with us for a very long time, and it is through the various generations that we see a repetition of this experience.

How then, should we proceed in this world, and continue to live with the knowledge that we shall die? The will is certainly affected by this knowledge. Desire is informed by it. Throughout recorded history there are a plethora of examples of the death obsession in art, literature, and in customs. We can see it even today as our society progresses just how much death has informed us.

Dr. Carl Jung, in his *Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology* states ardently that “In neurosis we speak of an infantile attitude or the predominance of infantile phantasies and desires. In so far as infantile impressions and desires are of obvious importance in normal people they are equally influential in neurosis, but they have here no etiological significance, they are reactions merely, being chiefly secondary and regressive phenomena.” Neuroses are indicative of a conflict within the individual, and this is shown forth by means of mental regression, as Dr. Jung suggests. We can choose to ignore our propensity for neurotic thinking, as well as the abnormal, but ultimately it would not be in our best interests.

What is in our best interests is determined in the end by ourselves, for there is no one else that can make these choices for us. We live, and we struggle through this world one way or another, etching out an existence for ourselves one day at a time. Yet, there seems to be something missing. What that something is, I cannot personally identify. As a placeholder for my ignorance, I will assume that it is our lack of understanding of what happens to consciousness after death that is the biggest problem of purpose, and meaning.

There are still some in this world that propose to know the exact answers to the conditions we face as human beings, and that is through the various religious traditions as practiced throughout the world. The truth of the matter is that all these responses, whether it be in the form of religious, or even philosophical ideas, are the result of a human nature that is fragile. We cannot know the purpose of things in terms of the metaphysical because we do not have direct access to these experiences objectively.

We must remember that we were thrust into this world outside of our consent. No matter how much we love this life, it must be emphasized that there is a connection between the state of non-existence, and our own original state prior to conception. This connection lies simply in the fact that they are one, and the same as non-existent, acausal, and beyond the scope of human understanding. It is through meditation on death that we can begin to understand what it must have been like prior to our existence. That is, the state of the tranquility of nothingness, of the acausal, and the silence of eternity found through death.

Death is the great experience in which we must realize that we shall one day also pass through the veil of it. Knowing this should give us reason to pause, and think deeply on our inner purpose for existing. What can we do to turn our understanding of the world into one that encompasses death as a true reality? The only way we can do that is by acknowledging the facts surrounding death, and the dying process from an intellectual point of view.

The individual is alone responsible for their response to the recognition of death. This is a powerful statement because it recognizes the need for the individual to make a choice, rather than be forced into something. There are limited choices that we have in this world, and our recognition of death is one of them. It is obvious that everyone knows about death, and the reality that we will all die someday is universally understood. But there is often no reflection accompanying this knowledge.

True reflection on death is one in which we decide consciously to educate ourselves regarding the physiological processes involved, as well as on other matters of the health sciences concerning the body. Doing this involves a specific effort on behalf of the individual to seek out this information actively. By doing this, the individual then can undertake the responsibility, and approach towards death that is mature, and nuanced in understanding. What I mean by this is that the processes of death, decay, and other scientific facts should be independently studied by the individual in order to better understand the various facets of death as a reality.

Once death is accepted, and understood better by the individual, it is then that there is a possibility of a certain stoicism regarding the matter developing within the psyche. The mind of the individual is malleable in the sense that we are all able to learn throughout our lifespan regardless of age. This is an important point to be made, and this is because it must be said that it is never too late to be humbled by the prospect of our deaths. Learning is implicitly about understanding the world on a level that allows us to accept our deaths with dignity, and erudition.

Education is something that is so important, even if it is informal outside of an academic setting. The more we are willing to learn about ourselves, the more we will be able to utilize tools of understanding regarding our finite natures. These tools include psychological aspects of education, as well as the understanding of the natural sciences. We can only surmise that the more we study these things, the more we will be able to accept our own deaths in a stoic way.

Of course, we have the choice to flail about, and go slowly insane from the overwhelming nature of the world around us if we let ourselves be unchecked for long. It is in our nature to veer off into the abnormal when we look too long at the details behind life, and death, and analyze both to the point of severe scrutiny. The more we understand about the world around us, the greater the chance that we too could go mad. Certainly this is a distinct possibility, yet it is not one which is set in stone for everyone.

There are many who are able to compartmentalize cosmic, and scientific knowledge in such a way that it does not disturb their inner composure. This is all well, and good, yet there are also many who suffer from the propensity towards mental illness. It is about these individuals that I am speaking of when I say that it is possible to become insane, unhinged, and without foundation. It is possible for anyone to lose their sense of grounding when it comes to the contemplation of eternity, and death. This is understandable because cosmic things have a profound effect upon human beings.

The cosmic is the ultimate level in terms of contemplating the grand scheme of things. If we look at the cosmic, we are thinking in terms of that which is beyond the scope of the individual. There is no one that can truly declare they have a foundational grounding in relation to the cosmic because it is so vastly remote from us in terms of scope. We are so incredibly small in comparison to the heavenly bodies that it is amazing that we have any grounding at all to stand on philosophically. Of course, we know what we know about reality through our senses, and through the scientific method. Yet, we are so insignificant in the big picture that it is hard at times to think about these things with any sort of rationality.

Nonetheless, we cannot simply just admit our smallness, and give up completely. The world around us is something that demands recognition, and attention to the smallest of details regarding reality. This includes all the constructs that have been devised for us throughout life, and of those which we have ourselves created over time. We have a primal need to separate fact from fiction, and to delve into intellectual things. This is simply something that we do as humans, regardless of the efficacy of our troubles to find out the truth.

As I previously mentioned, it is possible to make the choice to allow ourselves to fall apart mentally when thinking about the big picture. It is also possible that we, as individuals, can transcend our limitations through the use of logic, and reasoning. Though we may never find out the exact nature of reality beyond the information passed down to us, and by our senses, we still must carry on if we are to choose to survive. By this, I mean that if we want to live, and survive this world, we had better choose to seek out the answers to the world around us.

Even if we cannot know the fullness of the truth, it is important to continue on as if there was at least a remote possibility of learning this. This is the desire of mankind to emerge into the causal world through the power of will. Our very nature is such that we continue to seek out answers for things which are difficult to decipher either because we don't have all the information, or because we currently cannot know due to limitations.

The world is chaotic. We must examine each part of life as it comes to us from a rational perspective. This much has been established. Within the wellspring of the identity of each individual lies a more profound truth; that of the fact that we know we are destined for the grave. We have to learn to navigate around this fact in such a manner that we prolong our current lives despite this knowledge.

The will is where we gather strength internally. It is through the power of desire that there is a foundational eruption of creativity that is brought about because of our knowledge of death. This knowledge makes us all the more human because it causes us to create various things in this world which have aesthetic, emotional, and sometimes scientific value.

Through the power of the subjective mind we are cognizant of our place in the universe, however crude our understanding of that might be. We do not know exactly where we are, but we do know that we exist, and that we thirst for knowledge, and accomplishment. Our desires to overcome death through leaving an artistic (or familial) legacy can also be examined further as an aspect of the human mind.

We alone are responsible for our actions in this world. Certainly, we are born into a world of limitations, but we do have a choice as to how we will interact with others. Will we be creative, and artistic? Or will we be destructive? These are important questions that have no black, and white answers. We are all capable of creating, and destroying in our various stations in this life. Each one of us has the ability to leave a mark on this world.

Because we are responsible for our actions, we are also deeply alone in this world. Of course, we do have interactions, and connections with others most often at some point in our lives. Yet, there is a sense of loneliness that cannot be described adequately with words as it is of a cosmic import rather than a simple passing thought. This loneliness is universal to all human beings as it can be felt without any specificity to its expression.

# Chapter Eight



## Returning to the Concept of Self-Awareness as being Foundational

To be self-aware is to be conscious of who we are from the ground up, as well as of those things within us that are constructs rather than real. The more we learn about ourselves, we come closer to the edge of despair. This is not to say that we will necessarily become despairing, it is just that there is a closer proximity to despair in concert with knowing more. It is possible to end up being completely optimistic when considering the whole of life, despite the outcome which is death.

Nonetheless, it is through the hardships that we come across in life that we learn about the true nature of meaning, and purpose. Meaning, and purpose, can only be created by the individual, and this is because there are no solid guidelines as to how we should live our lives outside of religious, and other traditional cultural influences. We must determine our goals for ourselves, and then follow through with attaining them for the sake of the goal itself. If there is no purpose to life outside of subjective experiences, we should then determine what it is we wish to accomplish whilst we live.

Self-awareness is foundational to the core of who we are as human beings. It is through introspection, self-education, and rational thinking that we are able to determine what is best for us regarding the course of our lives. Sometimes we make mistakes, and are not able to accomplish one goal or another due to situations that arise. Other times it seems as if what we seek out, we are able to find rather easily. It is with the knowledge of the fact that we are imperfect that we must approach goals, ideals, and thoughts concerning our own path in this world. This is the foundation upon which we must build our lives. Everything that we experience is bound to disappear one day when we die.

Death is our constant companion because it is through the awareness of our fragility that we are truly humbled on an individual level. Every action that we take has the shadow of death behind it, inclusive of every conversation we have, every aspiration or goal, and every moment of pleasure or pain. The more we are in touch with our inner emotions, the more we are able to live as authentically as possible. This authenticity is one in which the individual lives out their deepest desires in a creative way that has an impact on the world. It is through this impact that others can benefit from the impression that we have made upon the world whilst we live, thereby sowing the seeds of a legacy that can be left behind.

Despair is something that can be described but must be experienced in order to truly understand what it means to live through emptiness. The emptiness deep down inside of our very being is universal in nature even though it is subjectively experienced. Certainly we have a propensity to find meaning, and positive experiences in this life, of this there is no doubt. However, it must be said that despair trumps all other emotional experiences because of the profound nature of despondency itself. We all have experienced despair at some point in this life, whether it has been only temporary or chronically dealt with.

It is through sadness, loneliness, and other experiences of the human intellect that we find ourselves understanding the depths of melancholy, and the tragic. Our awareness of the world around us keeps us painfully knowledgeable about our lot in life. That which deals with the morose, and the mournful is ever present in the subjective mind of the individual. It is always there, even if it is relegated to the unconscious portions of the mind.

In every smile, every moment of bliss, or joy, there are the pangs of suffering lurking around the corner, and mentally entering into our sphere of knowledge. As we experience pleasure in this world, there is a faint trace of the suffering which is to inevitably come in some form. Despair aligns us with our true nature which is to experience the world in a profound way that is often unspeakable. Because it is unspeakable it is inadequate for me to write or expound upon it, but I will make the best attempt possible.

Our obsession with living, and maintaining a lifestyle of health, and decent standards is one in which we find ourselves bound by environmental, social, and other factors of which self-interest is paramount. This begs the question as to whether or not this is a sincere form of self-delusion because even if we maintain ourselves healthy, we shall die one day. Of course, this is not to dissuade anyone from living an active lifestyle. Far from it. The purpose of what I am saying amounts to a questioning of our foundations from the ground up. We must be willing to dissect every aspect of what makes us human in order to understand our position as individuals in this world.

When we question the world around us, we are then able to take off the various masks which we wear in front of others, even if it is for a little while. What I mean is that we can take an honest look at ourselves the moment we question who we are, what we are doing here, and what our purpose is.

I have myself witnessed individuals go through despair in its various forms over the years. There is a sense of hopelessness that one cannot do anything to assuage the grief that forces us to pause, and think about our priorities. This is a normal feeling to have, especially because it is only natural that we as humans attempt to find a way to help others in their time of need. We are not always successful in doing so, and this shows through in situations where there is more nuance than black or white.

Death is the antidote to pride, and this is evidenced by how people react when they are forced to deal with it head on. A sudden accident, a stroke, a heart attack, or some other pathological condition could develop in someone you know or care about. What do you do other than attempt to assist them the best that you can? Surely, we must know just how fragile we truly are when we realize just how easy it is to suffer from any number of illnesses or diseases. No one knows what the future holds when it comes to the manner of how death will overtake us. This is one of the great mysteries of life, in that pathological conditions can cause a sudden, and fulminating onset of disease.

We cannot realistically live our lives with every second being counted as possibly being our last, but it is healthy to have at least the concept in the background of one's daily life. The contextual is important to focus on here, especially when it comes to whether or not death is ultimately seen as relevant to one's own being. The fact of the matter is that we all will have to decide as to how we are going to approach death. This is where self-awareness comes in, and informs us of the facts surrounding our own eventual demise.

As we walk through this world we are continuously under the spell of simply existing, and not actively confronting the source of our anguish. We go through so many trials, and tribulations that it is admittedly hard to focus on seemingly abstract concepts like one's own future death. Nonetheless, it is important to reflect on such things because at some point we are going to have to face reality. The more we prepare ourselves for death, the closer we will come to that authenticity of being which is centered on an awareness of mortality.

Our awareness of the world around us allows us to function on a level which keeps us striving to survive an often-hostile environment. We can continue to live life without reflecting on this awareness, but we will ultimately deceive ourselves by doing so. What I mean by this is that it is through the construct of the self that we must strive to overcome our ultimate circumstances which prevent us from living our lives to the fullest. It is when we decide to become aware of our cognitive faults that we then can realize that life is ultimately out of our control. Yes, we have control over some things in this world but that which is the most fundamental we do not have any control over.

Confrontation with one's own inner thoughts allows for there to be a sense of understanding when it comes to the subjective. By this, I mean that we can dissect to a degree those things which internally punish us by means of mental anguish. The anguish that we feel when we reflect on death keeps us aligned mentally with the absurd in life. When we see life as being as absurd as it is, we then are able to start to free ourselves.

None of us has the power to change our ultimate fate which is that of death. It is through the death drive that we manifest our ultimate desires towards self-annihilation, even if we outwardly choose life. We do not actively seek out to destroy ourselves, but when we re-create ourselves fundamentally through education or other means we are figuratively dying *for* ourselves. The symbolic is important when focusing on the death drive, as it is found primarily within the unconscious mind of the individual. Our awareness of death is extremely important as well because it keeps us honest with ourselves in our day to day lives.

Being aware also means focusing internally upon those things which are fundamental in this world; namely the causal, and death. It is through both the causal, as well as death that we find ourselves attempting to bargain with fate regarding our mortality. We often hear in passing stories about people that have suffered tremendously before dying, but we do not often think of ourselves in those situations. No, to us it seems almost impossible that we could die in horrendous ways, but that is our self-bias showing.

It is through the near-death experience that individuals learn the nature of the fragility of the human body. Very few have experienced this, but for those who have there is an advantageous gift provided by it through enhanced death awareness. Being forced to experience something so harrowing as nearly dying can cause one to internally dissect just how easily we can pass away. This is an important distinction to make; that the individual that has experienced a near-death experience has an advantage over the one that has not.

By means of introspection, the individual is able to set forth a mental passage for themselves whereby the ability to look humbly at death becomes real. This humility influences every aspect of life because it represents an authenticity that can only come through inward-facing thought processes. These thought processes are based on a combination of real-life experiences alongside ideas surrounding death. When the individual is at their most humble, the truth of being is revealed.

This truth of being is one in which there is nothing that exists other than the current moment, alongside the inevitability of our future demise. In the wake of the death of the self through a reconstruction of one's own personality through traumatic experience, the individual is able to thereby take charge of the responsibility of being present in the moment. It is in the ever-fleeting present moment that we live, and we shall continue to do so until the day we die.

There is no one that can escape the power of the present moment, even if one were to cater to mental distractions. It is always there in every step we take along this journey we call life. In the end-scheme of things, it is in the present moment that we learn to appreciate the ephemeral nature of life. Everything changes, inclusive of the seasons. We are continuously at the mercy of not only the present moment but also of change itself. It is through the changes that we experience that we are also reminded of our mortality. Grey hairs, wrinkles, and other physical characteristics serve only to remind us that we too are beholden to change at all times.

The world owes us no explanation as to the events that occur in the causal realm of the physical. It is up to us to discover the fundamental scientific truths regarding the human species, as well as the nature of death, and dying. We are in a cold, vast space, and we wander around in search for answers to questions that may not have direct answers available to us. We have to understand that there is a certain point at which we have to realize that discovery takes time.

Discovery is a feature of human cognition, especially because it is the driving force behind the inner expression of desire manifested through the will. When we are cognizant of this reality, we can then utilize the power of the will to express our fundamental human rights, and freedoms. Of course, this freedom, and these rights have a responsibility attached to them. From birth we have assumed the responsibility of expanding individual agency through the desire that comes from within to survive. We are, first, and foremost, survivors, and this is a poignant truth that we must reflect on deeply.

We are born into a world where the fight for individual agency is one of moral, ethical, and sociological importance. Our ability to be self-aware to the extent that we are places demands on us internally to advance our rights as human beings. The recognition of these rights is not internationally received, or recognized, but this is just one further example of the depths of despair that cognizance brings with it. It is through the structures of our societal framework that we are forced to live our lives, and depending on where we live, these very same structures can be destructive to the individual.

There is no use in trying to fight the truth before us that death is ever present. We must recognize this, and move forward with the rest of our lives. By doing so, we enrich ourselves, and the lives of those around us by appreciating each moment that passes through the void of time. There is a desperation that clings onto our very being regarding life, and death. This desperation is expressed through distractions, as well as other divergencies which plague us in our daily lives.

Despite our grand destiny which is death, we have this life to live, and experience the world around us. It would appear as though we lived in a deserted place even though it is populated with other people. To clarify, it would seem as though we are destined to be alone in our struggle with death as it is an experience that we will all go through utterly alone. This is something we can choose to make peace with through simple acceptance of the truth. By doing so, we allow ourselves space to be able to heal mentally so that we can live our lives in some modicum of peace.

By peace I do not mean being completely free of conflict, as I am referring to an inner peace which cannot be swayed by the outside causal world. A resolution, if you will, to allow oneself to be a survivor in the wilderness that we call this life. Perhaps this is the highest aim; to be free in life through mental detachment from the pain, and grief that surrounds us continuously. This detachment does not indicate in any way a disavowing of pain, or grief, but a recognition of it through mental tranquility. It is possible that this is the highest mental state we could strive for.

When we are in our youth we seldom think about death, or about anything other than the myriad of possibilities that seemed strewn about for us. We also are very curious, yet very confused about the nature of things, and how reality interacts with us on a fundamental level. This is to be expected, because the brain doesn't stop developing until one is in their mid to late twenties. Everyone goes through the developmental process in the cycle of maturation, and this is something that is completely natural. When we are mature, we start to realize that some of the ideals we held in our youth were not solid enough foundationally for there to be any purpose in following them anymore.

It is through our nature that we must continue to live our lives. It is in this limited nature that we find ourselves struggling with what we can know, versus what we do not know. This has been an issue that is at the heart of humanity, and is timeless in the sense that we have always experienced it. None of us can determine what is outside of our senses because we simply do not have access to that portion of reality. It is outside of our peripheral view, and cannot be accessed. This is what brings so much despair to the world around us.

Though we are in the mire of despair, we still strive to live this life, and carry on, in general. There is a great inner tenacity, and strength that can be found in each one of us. This inner tenacity, and strength, is something that is at the core of our foundation as human beings. It is part, and parcel of the will, and the underlying primal desire behind it. The primal desire that manifests as the will forms a union in which it is hard to distinguish the two. What I mean here is that desire is so strong of a feature of human cognition that it is indistinguishable from the will.

We are always surrounded by conflicts, changes, and other obstacles that stand in our way when it comes to living our lives. These things are often temporary, but they still get in our way when it comes to attempting to achieve something. This situation can bring about with it another form of despair which often has no cure; that of ennui. It is through ennui that we become weary of the world around us, and often become avoidant.

In the end scheme of things, we are in a position where we must choose to either live life to the fullest, or collapse mentally under the stress of the world. Self-awareness is something we all possess, but we do not readily appreciate it for what it is; a means by which we can enter into a deeper sense of understanding regarding the intricacies of life. When we are born, we are like a blank canvas, and we accumulate knowledge through instinct, socialization, and environmental factors. It is through the power of the intellect that we are able to transcend our lowly positions in life, and mentally take charge of our inner mental world.

Our ability to survive difficulties such as physical, or mental disabilities keeps us cognizant of the fact that we are indeed survivors. All of humanity cries out for the power of survival, and the strength of the will. In our final days, perhaps we will look back on life, and understand that suffering was always present even when we experienced moments of pleasure. We can only assume that we will be able to understand the aspects of suffering when we are on our death beds.

The constructs that surround us are artificial in the sense that they do not represent the actual truth about life. Constructs, such as personal identity, and the concept of the persona we have developed over time for ourselves, are all superficial in the end of our lives. We will, at some point, recognize that almost everything we have learned about ourselves has been a farce. The truth of who we are lies deep within the core of the psychological makeup of the individual. This is influenced by environmental, social, and interpersonal interactions throughout the lifespan of the individual.

Despair comes to us when we least expect it to. We are continuously assailed on all sides by the diverse challenges we face on a daily basis. This is reflected in our psychological makeup, as we are capable of exhibiting pathological illnesses as a result of our interaction with the world. The world is continuously pushing us toward an identity which is based on the superficial, rather than the profound. This is the sociological aspect of human life; in that it is influenced greatly by the outside world.

Otto Rank, and Hanns Sachs state in their work *The Significance of Psychoanalysis for the Mental Sciences* emphatically that “We will not be surprised to find that the average man, as daydreamer, finds the same enjoyment in the production of such phantasies as the hearer of a poem in its reception. Both functions are in essential aspects identical, in so far as the reception of a phantasy consists only in the fact that it is experienced.” It is through the aesthetic, and artistic, that the mind can find refuge in the mire that is self-awareness. Of course, an understanding of the sciences is also important, but a case must also be made for the arts.

In the abstract we find ourselves looking introspectively towards the inner worlds that we inhabit in our minds. Causal reality is something we all face, but do not fully understand. With the power of our minds we are able to dissect the various aspects of life, and look toward the subjective as an additional dimension in understanding. The world around us, as I have previously stated, is complex, and we can only navigate it insofar as we have educated ourselves thoroughly.

To conclude this essay, I will go over the main objectives behind my theories. One objective is to elucidate the condition of mankind in that we are beholden to despair due to our self-awareness. Another objective is that we must look toward the subjective to decipher those aspects of reality which the senses only give us clues about. Thirdly, and finally, my main objective is to open a discussion regarding life, and death, as I see it.

Ultimately, we are all in a position where we must accept our eventual deaths, and live today as if this very moment is all that we have. Each passing moment that goes by is an opportunity to open our minds to the possibilities that exist in the causal world. We may never fully understand the reasons for why we exist, where consciousness goes after death, or the true nature of the objective world, and this is okay. All of us are united in our despair towards the world, even if we are loathe to admit it even to ourselves. There is happiness to be had, as well as moments of fleeting pleasure, but we are by necessity never satisfied with attaining our goals. In the end of all things, we are alone in our experience of this world.

## Biography



Thomas Sheldon MacDonald is the author of fourteen books largely dealing with poetics, philosophy, and surrealism. He is a graduate of Miami Dade College, and is continually pursuing knowledge through education as well as independent study. His philosophy is focused on concepts of non-being through processing internal experiences in a rational way. Thomas grew up in a small town in Massachusetts, and is presently residing in Miami, Florida. When not studying assiduously, Thomas enjoys the time spent with his loved ones whenever possible.

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Thomas Sheldon MacDonald.

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